DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 828 EA 022 383

TITLE	Quality Criteria for Middle Grades: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review.
INSTITUTION	California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento. Office of School Improvement.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-8011-0905-1
PUB DATE	90
NOTE	241p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 ($4.50; add sales tax for California residents).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Standards; *Change Strategies; *Educational Planning; Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; *Self Evaluation (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS	*California

ABSTRACT

Because positive changes in a school's capacity to educate all its students are not automatic, the California Department of Education has launched an educational reform model embodied in a comprehensive School Improvement Plan (SIP). The model is based on student-centered educational standards (quality criteria) that direct the four SIP processes of planning, implementation, self-study, and program quality review. These processes were developed to engage the entire school community in improvement activities to benefit all student populations. This four-part document has been designed to help members of a quality review team conduct a review of middle school programs. Part I describes how the quality criteria can be used for planning and implementing school improvement initiatives at a school site. Part II is the guide for conducting a school's self-study. Part III describes program quality review procedures, the application of quality criteria to the school's curriculum and instructional program, and the means for developing suggestions in the report of findings. Part IV details the quality criteria for middle grades, including eight curricular and five schoolwide criteria. Curricular criteria reflect the major themes of state curriculum handbooks, frameworks, and curriculum guides. Schoolwide criteria, emphasizing students in transition, are derived from various school improvement publications and the judgment of middle grades educational practitioners. (MLH)

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MIDDLE GRADES

Quality Criteria for Middle Grades

Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review

Prepared under the direction of the
Office of School Improvement
California Department of Education

Publishing Information

The *Quality Criteria for Middle Grades* was compiled by the Office of School Improvement, California Department of Education, and was published by the Department (mailing address: P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720).

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ISBN 0-8011-0905-1

CONTENTS

Preface iv

Introduction v

Summary of the Key Concepts in California's Middle Grades Reform Movement vii

PART I: Planning and Implementing 1

PART II: Guide for Conducting the Self-Study 7
- Organizing for the Self-Study 7
- Applying the Quality Criteria 9

PART III: The Middle Grades Program Quality Review Process 15
- General Overview 15
- Methodology 19
- Procedures Before the Review 21
- Procedures During the Review 24
- Procedures After the Review 33

PART IV: The Program Quality Review Criteria 37
- English-Language Arts 39
- Mathematics 49
- Science 55
- History-Social Science 61
- Visual and Performing Arts 67
- Physical Education 75
- English as a Second Language 81
- Foreign Language 93
- Students in Transition: The Culture of the Middle Grades 99
- The Curriculum of the Middle Grades 103
- Instructional Practices 107
- Student Support System 111
- Improvement Processes 115

PREFACE

Middle grades reform is a high priority of the California Department of Education. This handbook, Quality Criteria for the Middle Grades: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review, is a manifestation of that priority. It represents the fourth major publication effort by the Department in support of improving middle grades schooling in the state.

The Model Curriculum Guides for Kindergarten through Grade Eight provide an outline of the curriculum standards for the middle grades. Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools is a comprehensive statement of what middle grades schooling should be in all respects for all students. Although not specific to middle grades alone, the state curriculum frameworks and handbooks also serve as major resources for the newest messages on curriculum and instruction for all grades.

All of these publications have been used extensively by Departmental staff, field consultants, and the Middle Grade Program Quality Review Task Force in drafting this handbook. The major messages of these publications were synthesized into eight curricular and five schoolwide criteria. These criteria are intended to be descriptions of the ideal middle grades program. They are standards against which a school's program is to be compared, first by the school community in a self-study and eventually by an outside team during a program quality review. The results of this comparison become the basis for developing "the next best steps" necessary to make positive changes at a given school.

We hope that this handbook will be an effective step in communicating directly to school-site personnel the current best thinking on middle grades schooling. In that spirit this publication is offered as a critical guide in the ongoing effort of California's schools to achieve excellence and equity for all middle grades students.

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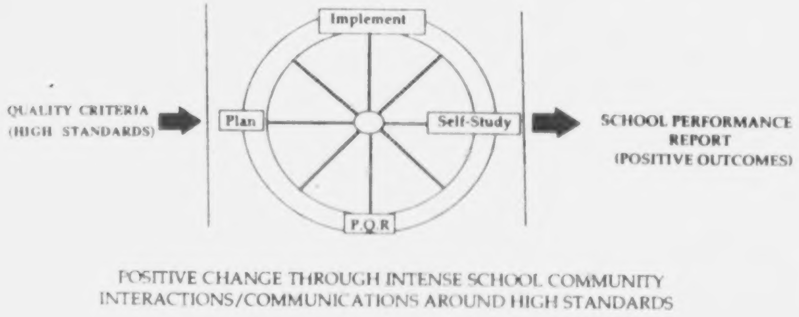
Instructional Support Services Division

Wendy Harris, Manager
Office of School Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Although change of one kind or another is virtually inevitable, significant and positive changes in a school's capacity to educate all of its students are not automatic. The California Department of Education has, therefore, embarked on an educational reform agenda which can be characterized by the following three-part model (see Fig. 1). The School Improvement Program (SIP) and its related processes play a major role in this model.

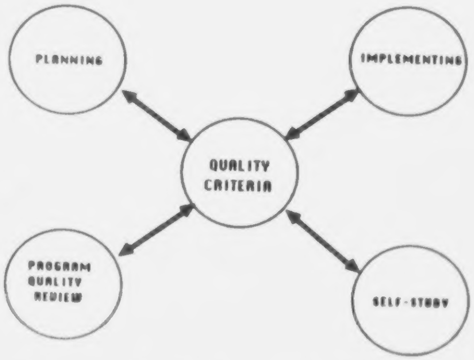
Fig. 1 School Improvement Change Model


QUALITY CRITERIA
(HIGH STANDARDS)
Implement
Plan
Self-Study
P.Q.R
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REPORT
(POSITIVE OUTCOMES)
POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH INTENSE SCHOOL COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS/COMMUNICATIONS AROUND HIGH STANDARDS

The first component involves the establishment of educational standards. They are reflected, in large part, in the Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve, the curriculum guides for kindergarten through grade eight, and the state's various curriculum frameworks and handbooks. These publications are designed to help guide local districts in their efforts to establish higher-quality curricula for all students.

The quality criteria in this handbook are syntheses of the Department's major curricular and schoolwide standards. They are statements drafted by practicing educators of what an ideal program can look like in operation. They are primarily student-centered in that they include frequent references to what students are learning or what they are doing in order to learn. The quality criteria, therefore, serve as the foundation for the four SIP processes of (1) planning; (2) implementing; (3) self-study; and (4) program quality review (PQR). These processes are designed to engage the school community in schoolwide improvement activities to improve the effect of its program on all student populations enrolled at the school site (see Fig. 2): average, gifted and talented, underachieving, limited-English-proficient, and special education students.

Fig. 2 Criteria and Processes


PLANNING
IMPLEMENTING
QUALITY CRITERIA
PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW
SELF-STUDY

In planning, a school compares its current program with the quality criteria, identifies "matches and gaps," and develops specific change initiatives based on its findings. The goal is to establish a program consistent with the criteria. The criteria then serve as frames of reference or reminders of what the program should look like while the school community is systematically implementing the planned changes. After approximately three years of work toward realizing these ideals, the school conducts a self-study of all aspects of its program, again, in comparison with both the curricular and schoolwide quality criteria. Tentative plans for how the school might better align its program with the criteria are identified in the self-study report. Finally, a PQR by an outside team is conducted to review the program using these same criteria. As with the planning and self-study processes, the PQR process identifies "matches and gaps" between the school's current program and the criteria. These comparisons lead to formal suggestions by the PQR team as well as action plans developed collaboratively by both the PQR team and the school's leadership team. The action plans include a detailed description of who, what, when, and how future changes will take place; they represent specific improvement initiatives which the school owns and thereby commits to implement.

In the SIP change model, these four processes provide the momentum while the quality criteria provide the direction for significant educational improvements at school sites. Taken together, the criteria and processes are designed to generate the intensity of activity necessary to trigger what have been characterized as quantum leaps or "aha's" in the capacity of a school community to achieve educational excellence and equity for each of its student populations.

To that end, this handbook is an invitation to California's educators and interested community members to join together in planning and implementing their own meaningful local change efforts. And through the SIP processes and criteria outlined here, they are free to do so for the best of reasons; i.e., not because of the external promise of reward or threat of accountability but because of commitment to and ownership of their own local plan for positive change.

Office of School Improvement
1990

SUMMARY OF THE KEY CONCEPTS
IN
CALIFORNIA'S MIDDLE GRADES REFORM MOVEMENT

Students in the middle grades are in transition from childhood to adolescence. They face profound changes in their intellectual, emotional, physical, and social development, and these changes bring new challenges to those who deal with them. The particular challenge to middle grades teachers, administrators, and parents is to help these students to direct their energies during this period toward achieving their optimal intellectual, social, and personal development.

To do this, students must begin to move away from learning which is solely or largely dependent on teacher-centered schooling. Middle grades students must begin to take more control over and responsibility for their own academic growth. The central questions of early adolescence -- Who am I? Where do I belong? Who cares about me? What do I care about? What kind of person do I want to become? and What do I have to do to become such a person? -- must provide the framework for the delivery of a comprehensive, balanced, and dynamic curriculum that will capture and keep the attention of each student as he or she prepares for a lifetime of learning.

The activity level of the early adolescent must be viewed as an asset, a resource that can be constructively utilized to supplement and enhance the learning process through activities such as special projects, fieldwork, peer teaching and learning, library research, and small-group activities. Exploratory and elective courses can likewise offer outlets for personal, social, and academic growth as students continue to develop their abilities to think, communicate, and develop new knowledge, skills, and values.

Attributes of a High-Quality Middle Grades Program

The program quality review criteria encompass the latest thinking about middle grades schooling. The method and the content of both processes have been designed to reflect a well-functioning organization and strong content in curricular areas. As the school community begins to look at the ways in which the instructional program affects students through the self-study and program quality review, a series of overarching themes or attributes of an effective middle grades program become important.

Student-Centered Schooling

The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture -- Sara Lawrence Lightfoot
Corporate Cultures -- Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy

In the middle grades, a student-centered philosophy provides the framework for the evolving culture of the school. Teachers and administrators believe that all students can achieve high levels of intellectual, emotional, social, moral, and ethical development. The school's culture is carefully and deliberately promoted by the commitment to high academic standards, high standards of personal and social behavior, a strong belief on the part of teachers that they can and do make a difference in the lives of their students, a knowledge base that includes the multiple developmental characteristics of early adolescence, a recognition of norms and standards, and a strong leadership that is characterized by actions which express commitment to the school's common purposes and goals.

Academic Core

> Every middle grades student should pursue a common, comprehensive, academically oriented core curriculum irrespective of primary language or ethnic background.
>
> Caught in the Middle

A basic premise of middle grades programs is that all students pursue a common, comprehensive, academically oriented core curriculum which prepares them for future success in high school and which provides the foundation required to exercise subsequent academic and career options. This supposition is based on the current literature which suggests that all educated citizens should possess a common core of knowledge. This core curriculum includes cultural literacy, scientific literacy, knowledge of the humanities, and appreciation of the values that constitute the basis of our society. Such a curriculum empowers students to achieve a high-quality life. In addition, it provides students with the skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, calculating, and thinking critically. All students should have access to and be successful in learning the core curriculum.

Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 should study a full, balanced curriculum that includes English-language arts, literature, mathematics, science, health, history-social science, geography, visual and performing arts, and physical education. In addition, they should have the opportunity to acquire a second language and participate in elective, intramural, cocurricular, and exploratory curricula. These latter areas are related to and complement or reinforce the core curriculum, allowing students to pursue current interests and explore broad themes and topics of potential interest.

Instructional Methodology and the Early Adolescent

> Instructional practice should emphasize active learning strategies which are consistent with the goals of the core curriculum and the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.

Caught in the Middle

The content of the core curriculum is linked to the heightened curiosity of young adolescents. The students are approached and challenged as active learners, busily engaged in the process of bringing new knowledge and new ways of knowing on a wider and broader range of increasingly difficult problems. All students are challenged through the use of varied instructional strategies which are exciting, pertinent, integrated, and diverse. Students not only become more responsible for, but also take increasingly more control over, their own learning.

Learning to Learn

> Every middle grade student should develop a repertoire of learning strategies and study skills which emphasizes reflective thought and systematic progression toward the goal of independent learning.

Caught in the Middle

Students in the middle grades experience a change in the ways in which they interact with the curriculum. In this transition to high school, where learning is viewed as primarily the responsibility of the student, they must learn how to learn for themselves. In the middle grades, this is an organized process that includes instruction in time management, priority setting, the use of resources, the development of memory, self-discipline, cognitive strategies, and study skills. Through the strategies, students "develop a conscious control of their thinking and acting in response to a given assignment" and in charting their own course for growth.

Students with Special Needs

> Every middle grade student should have access to the most advanced levels of curricula offered during each of the middle grades; this opportunity should be facilitated through educational policies and practices which make the highest level of content mastery a valid and obtainable goal for vastly increased numbers of students.

Caught in the Middle

In the middle grades, students with special needs, including limited-English-proficient students, underachievers, and special education students, receive assistance designed to help them succeed in the core curriculum. The curriculum is organized around content goals and skills instruction, which are a part of the regular classroom program. The regular curriculum is not diluted or replaced by remedial subject matter. Instead, the staff ensures that the instructional program motivates, challenges, and rewards students as they focus their attention on positive academic values and the regular core curriculum. The entire staff of the school shares actively in supporting the optimal development of students with special needs and helps them to master study skills techniques, learning strategies, communication skills, test-taking skills, and problem-solving skills.

Organization and Structure

> The nature of the schools' organizational structure establishes continuity in adult-child relationships and opportunities for the lives of students and adults to cross in mutually meaningful ways.
>
> Successful Schools for Young Adolescents
> Joan Lipsitz

The cornerstone of the organization and structure of the school is a highly articulated sense of mission regarding the middle grades student. The principal and other school leaders are knowledgeable about and provide guidance in curriculum and instruction to maximize the success of the adolescent. Teachers and administrators believe that all students can develop morally, ethically, intellectually, culturally, socially, and emotionally to their fullest potential. These fundamental beliefs are evidenced in how teachers and administrators care about their students and what the students are and are not learning; how they work together, plan, conduct instructional activities, and carry out schoolwide activities; and how they communicate with students and among themselves. Throughout the school there is open, candid recognition and discussion of the problems of the school on the part of the staff members. They plan collectively and collegially to choose curricula, to plan instruction for individual students and shared student populations, and to solve any problems which might impede the effectiveness of their school program.

Summary

These themes or attributes of a high-quality middle grade program emerge and reemerge in the criteria contained in the Quality Criteria for Middle Grades. They include eight curricular and five schoolwide criteria. The criteria for English-language arts, mathematics, science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, physical education, English as a second language, and foreign language reflect the major themes of the state curriculum handbooks, frameworks, and K-8 curriculum guides. The schoolwide criteria are derived from a variety of recent books on school improvement and reform, Caught in the Middle, and the judgment of middle grades educational practitioners.

The PQR criteria represent ideal standards toward which school staff members should strive as they work to improve the quality of middle grades education as experienced by their students. Staff members in all middle grades should find these standards essential as a yardstick for setting specific goals and in measuring progress. They are not meant to be so specific as to prohibit teachers from exercising professional judgment. In short, the quality criteria for middle grades should be perceived as tools for improving, planning, and organizing the school's academic program.

PART I
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

PLANNING

Planning means deciding **what** you want to do in the future, **how** you want to do it, by **when** you want to complete it, and **how** you know you have been successful. In a school, successful planning must also involve sufficient agreement among the members of a school community for them to have the commitment necessary to carry out the plan. There are at least three areas related to successful planning which deserve comment here: (1) resources; (2) process; and (3) outcomes.

Resources

The basic resources necessary for successful planning include both **funds** and **information**. The School Improvement Program (SIP) makes funds available to schools for the express purpose of planning and implementing significant educational improvements in (1) curriculum and instruction; (2) auxiliary services; (3) school organization; and (4) school climate. The goal of a school's changes in these areas is to meet three categories of students' needs: educational, personal, and occupational. In addition, the SIP school is charged with effectively meeting these needs with all of its students: average, gifted and talented, limited-English-proficient, special education, and underachieving or at-risk students.

Since the focus is on **improvement**, a significant portion of the school's SIP money should be set aside specifically for **change** initiatives. The SIP budget should not be spent exclusively on the **maintenance of the status quo**, even if the status quo is an improved one compared to years past.

Status quo expenditures usually involve the annual commitment to staff salaries for paraprofessionals, curriculum specialists, or coordinators. Change expenditures, on the other hand, help the school to grow and typically include training materials, teacher reference materials, consultants, teacher stipends for staff development or curriculum development carried out beyond the normal workday, substitutes, travel expenses for conferences or visits to other schools, parent training costs, one-time purchases of supplementary materials or equipment, evaluation costs, and expenses related to planning, the self-study, and the program quality review. Since there must be some provision for staff to have time away from the everyday operations of the school for planning and implementing change to be at all feasible, change expenditures should also include those which buy time (i.e., time to meet, investigate, discuss, explore, decide, plan, monitor, evaluate, train, learn, and so on).

It is recommended, therefore, that at least 33 percent of the school's annual SIP budget be set aside for change expenditures. This policy guarantees that there will be SIP money available to support the planning, implementing, and staff development activities so vital to significant ongoing improvements at a school site.

Information is a second major resource for achieving change, and there are at least two kinds: inside and outside. **Inside information** consists of what the school community already knows about curriculum, instruction, and its own students, staff, school culture, and community. **Outside information** involves what is known in the field of education about effective schooling, including printed material as well as exemplary practices or programs in operation.

Generating inside information involves questions such as: What are the effects of our program on our students, ourselves, and the community? How do these results relate to what we are doing at school and in the classrooms? What are the unconscious rules, norms, assumptions, expectations, or policies that make up our school culture? The last two questions are often the most difficult to answer because they involve becoming conscious of the unconscious as well as trying to understand the why's connecting actions with outcomes. Answers will involve what is taught, how it is taught, why it is taught that way, how the school is organized, how it functions, who talks to whom about what and when, and what schooling means for the different kinds of students at the school.

Typical sources of inside information include the school performance report, grades, criterion-referenced data on student outcomes, student and staff attendance data, data on dropouts, indices of student conduct, opinion and satisfaction surveys of students and parents, face-to-face discussions, staff observations and interviews, and other local studies.

Useful points of departure for exploring these data in relation to the questions posed above include the quality criteria, both curricular and schoolwide, as well as the state frameworks, handbooks, curriculum guides, and model curriculum standards. By contrasting what is currently taking place at the school with these state standards, the school community can discover areas it wishes to maintain, reinforce, or change. There is little doubt, however, that how well the school community will be able to understand and use the data collected will depend on how extensively face-to-face discussion, observation, thought, and negotiation of conflicting points of view and values take place during the planning process.

Since no school community is homogeneous, it is critical to try to answer questions about what is and what should be by researching the various points of view of all of the people who make up the school community. The program may be interpreted in one way from the perspective of adults, such as teachers (upper and lower grades, by department, by program specialty, and so on); administrators; parents (by ethnicity, grade level, subject area, and so on); categorical program staff; paraprofessionals; pupil services personnel; and other staff. On the other hand, the school's culture and educational program may look very different and reflect varying degrees of success from the point of view of different kinds of students, depending on grade level, subject area, categorical program participation, ethnicity, language proficiency, and so on. A school that is not effective with one of these groups or from one of these adult or student perspectives has to consider what it can do to change.

Outside information is also a critical resource because it involves new knowledge, skills, and options not yet known to the school community about what works and what does not. Again, state publications represent an excellent synthesis of much of what is known about high-quality curriculum, instruction, and school organizational structures and practices. Other important sources include educational journals and books; outside consultants; talented staff from within the district; staff from surrounding districts, county offices, and universities; and exemplary programs such as those conducted by schools recognized by the California Distinguished Schools Program.

In the final analysis, however, it is the school community's intense interaction with the inside information of what is and the outside information of what could be that will lead the school to an ambitious vision and plan what to do next to make the most significant improvements for all of its students.

Process

The goal of the planning process is to generate as much interaction as possible among all those who will have a role in implementing the resultant decisions or plans for change. This involvement will help not only to generate a comprehensive plan but also to establish the commitment necessary among those who must implement it.

There are five basic steps in the planning process. The first step is to establish a collective vision of what kind of school and what kind of student the school community wants to develop. The second step is to collect both inside and outside information. The goal here is to describe the current program in detail and compare it with what could or should be happening differently at the school. The third step is to analyze and discuss the information collected to determine its relationship and relevance to the future vision as well as the current practices and outcomes of the school. The fourth step is to negotiate a consensus among all interested parties regarding the improvement initiatives to be undertaken and their expected effects. The fifth step is to design the improvement activities and establish the roles necessary for carrying them out.

The amount of time it will take to carry out a comprehensive planning process, however, will vary depending on the size of the school, the relative need for serious reform, and the format of the plan to be generated. For example, to draw up an initial plan which describes everything that is happening at a school, including ongoing activities as well as changes, may take an entire school year. However, to draft a plan for a select number of improvement initiatives, such as the tentative suggestions and action plans normally generated by a self-study, may only take two to four months.

The structure currently recommended for the self-study can also serve as a model for initial planning. For example, a leadership team, in cooperation with the school site council, can organize and guide the planning process at the school site by establishing committees to collect information and plan using the quality criteria as major organizers for the committee structure. The leadership team is made up of representatives of the various structures within the school (e.g., the school site council; grade-level teachers in elementary schools or subject-area teachers at the secondary level; categorical program staff; program specialists; other staff at the school and district offices; and parents and students representing various student populations at the school). The leadership team should meet with the committees to monitor their activities, provide support, and receive periodic reports on their progress. This team should also report regularly to the school site council and receive direction from that group throughout the planning process because it is this group that is charged with the ultimate responsibility of guiding, developing, and approving the school's plan.

As mentioned previously, the quality criteria and the state publications on which they are based should be the major organizers for the planning process. It should result in the identification of **matches and gaps** as the current program and the criteria are compared. For the curriculum criteria, in particular, the planning process proceeds from (1) what students should be learning in each curricular area (i.e., the district's core curriculum); to (2) major instructional strategies, organizational structures, and policies to help students learn that curriculum; to (3) variations in the strategies, structures, and policies necessary to ensure the success of each student population enrolled at the school (e.g., average, gifted and talented, special education, limited-English-proficient, and underachieving students).

Outcomes

The most obvious outcome of a planning process is the plan (i.e, a consensus of the school community's commitments for what changes will be made in the future). It should also include a brief statement of the collective vision of what kind of school, teachers, or students the school community sets as its ideals.

The format of the plan should facilitate its use as a **working document**. If it is too large or detailed, individuals will find it difficult to consult or to find their role in implementing the planned changes. It is recommended, therefore, that, no matter how much information is collected on the current program and no matter how extensive the many positive activities or programs being carried on at the school, there should be a separate, identifiable **improvement plan** which includes a description of the major improvement initiatives to be implemented in the immediate future. This is not to say that a comprehensive plan of all programs, objectives, and activities at the school should not be written and constitute a plan in themselves. Rather, there should also be an improvement plan document which is detachable from the comprehensive plan or exists as a separate summary of the school's most current change initiatives.

The improvement plan should not, therefore, be imposing; nor should it be relegated to a shelf as a trophy of the planning process. Rather, it should include (1) a limited number of improvement initiatives (e.g., four to eight major programmatic changes that the school is willing and able to undertake and that will have a significant, positive impact on students); (2) the roles to be played by the members of the school community as they carry out the initiatives; (3) regularly scheduled planning, monitoring, and problem-solving activities to ensure implementation of the change initiatives; (4) an evaluation component which may include both quantitative and qualitative measures; and (5) a budget. The final product must ultimately be approved by the school site council and the local school board before implementation may be initiated.

IMPLEMENTING

Although it may seem obvious, implementation does not necessarily occur automatically after planning. In fact, for successful implementation to take place, it is often necessary to have the same kind of organizational structures in place that were used to develop the plan. This means that the principal, the school site council, the leadership team, and many of the committees formed to represent the various curricular and schoolwide interests in the school may still be required to see to it that the major change initiatives in the plan are carried out.

Systematic and ongoing communication among all participants in the school's planned improvements has been shown to be absolutely critical for the successful implementation and long-term adoption of local innovations. Weekly, biweekly, and monthly **implementation meetings** are the most important formal vehicles in the school's organizational structure to achieve this communication. Such meetings can accomplish several important implementation functions.

First, they can focus on monitoring who is doing what and the effects of the change activities on those who are involved (e.g., students, teachers, administrators, classified staff, parents, and so on). Second, staff who meet regularly can ensure the efficient and effective coordination of their efforts as well as an appropriate division of labor among all participants.

Second, coordination is particularly important in a school in which several student populations are provided services by the same adults, either within or outside of the classroom (e.g., limited-English-proficient, compensatory education, special education, average, or gifted and talented students). For example, innovations which often require a substantial amount of time for teachers to meet together might include:

- Establishing a literature-based English-language arts program for all students
- Improving the access of compensatory education students to higher levels of math and science
- Implementing cooperative learning with heterogeneous groups in science
- Mainstreaming students who receive special education services
- Providing supplementary support to migrant students

- Scheduling peer-coaching visits among teachers learning how to use sheltered English with limited-English-proficient students

A systematic, formal means must be provided for the adults at the school to plan together what they will do with each other or with their students, share with each other what they have been doing with the students they serve in common, solve problems, and review the outcomes of their efforts. This type of coordination is that which is needed on a regular basis for relatively large numbers of students at a school. Clearly, such coordination, or what has sometimes been referred to as ongoing planning, should take place in addition to what student study team meetings can accomplish for a relatively small number of individual students having unique problems in the program.

Third, the time spent in implementation meetings should be devoted mainly to the day-to-day and week-to-week problem solving necessary to carry out the school's planned innovations. Fourth, the regular feedback shared by the participants at these meetings can also provide the basis for any necessary modifications or on-course corrections that may arise. And finally, for those who may feel insecure or uneasy about trying to put new ideas into practice, such meetings should provide the personal and professional support needed for people to turn planned innovations into reality.

Of all these functions which may be served by implementation meetings, coordination and problem solving will undoubtedly predominate, both in terms of time spent in meetings and in the immediate effects that these communications will have on the success of the program.

As mentioned in the planning section, time is the major prerequisite for the successful implementation of the school's change initiatives. Therefore, teachers need time away from their teaching responsibilities. Released time, short meetings before and after school, periodic weekend or evening meetings, minimum days, and the release days available for schools which have in place a School-Based Coordination Program (AB 777) or a Pupil Motivation and Maintenance Program (SB 65) are among the options available for setting aside time to invest in the successful implementation of a school's planned improvements.

SUMMARY

Effective planning and implementation require modifications in the organizational structure or capacity of a school beyond what is necessary to carry out business as usual. Time, fiscal resources, committee structures, and communication strategies are the major components that must be addressed by a school that is committed to significant change. Planning produces a plan for future action, implementing produces action, and the latter does not naturally follow from the former without deliberate leadership.

At the elementary level the principal and the school site council are the most obvious choices for causing both processes to happen. At the secondary level the responsibility will more likely fall to the department chairpersons and assistant principal in addition to the principal and school site council. In either case, however, structured planning and implementing must both occur regularly and systematically in order to keep the school growing in its capacity for change as well as in its ability to provide an optimal education for all of its students.

PART II
GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING THE SELF-STUDY

The self-study is the foundation on which the middle grades program quality review (PQR) is built. It is a process that is carried out prior to the PQR and is conducted by members of the school community who are the most knowledgeable about the school. They must have the capacity to be objective about the quality of the school's program and the impact it has on all students. The self-study, carried out conscientiously by the school community, actually determines the success or failure of the entire improvement process; it should guide and shape improvements for months to come.

The self-study is an in-depth examination of the quality of the curriculum; the effectiveness of the instruction; and the structure, organization, and governance of the school.

Staff Roles

The participants in the self-study must agree to engage in an honest and candid schoolwide analysis. To do this, they must agree to listen to and respect each other's point of view in order to put together a clear picture of the school's program.

As individuals, members of the school community analyze their roles in the instructional program, observe how the curriculum and the instructional program affect various student populations, discuss their observations with each other, and search for ways to improve the effect of their program on all students. As a group, they must reach beyond what they as individuals know, listen carefully to the ideas and perceptions of others, and reach new levels of understanding about the way the instructional program works for their students.

For the curricular areas, staff members compare their curriculum with state and district standards and review the implementation of the curriculum embedded in each criterion. For the schoolwide criteria, all individuals at the school are involved in collecting information that shapes the input into generalizations about the school. Each individual is responsible for going beyond his/her particular classroom area of expertise or perspective and collaboratively synthesizing the points of view and contributions of everyone involved.

ORGANIZING FOR THE SELF-STUDY

The first step in the self-study is to decide what questions to ask, what activities to observe, and what data to review in order to be able to compare each aspect of the school program with the quality criteria. In addition, decisions must be made regarding what courses to observe; which students to follow through the day; what questions to ask students, staff members, administrators, and others involved in the various parts of the program; and what records they are to collect, including students' work samples, achievement data, records of awards, minutes of meetings, and so forth. In the development of procedures for collecting information, certain sets of data should not be overlooked. They include but are not limited to:

- The annual school performance reports
- Locally developed indicators of success
- The recommendations of the most recent program quality review
- The results of the California Assessment Program and other norm-referenced tests analyzed for patterns of achievement for all students as well as for specific groups of students, e.g., GATE, average, low achieving, bilingual, and special education students

To avoid having the self-study become an academic exercise or meaningless paperwork, organizers must keep the following in mind:

1. The organization of the self-study is shaped by the application of the quality criteria.
2. Information collected during the self-study should be gathered with its intended use in mind: to aid in diagnosis, planning, and implementation of school improvement activities.
3. Those organizing the self-study must guard against overburdening individuals, committees, or the school community as a whole with too much to do in too short a time.

If the self-study is to yield significant results and be manageable, members of the school community must allocate time to accommodate it. There are a number of ways to "make" time for a self-study:

- Designate all or a portion of each faculty meeting as a time to review what has been learned about the school.
- Use "prep" periods for classroom observations.
- Rotate staff members who are not regularly assigned to a classroom -- such as counselors, administrators, and other professional staff -- as substitutes so that teachers may be released to meet or observe other classrooms.
- Rotate substitute teachers through classrooms in order to free teachers to meet or observe.
- Use regularly scheduled assemblies and other school functions to free small groups of teachers to meet and discuss their findings.

The Quality Criteria for Self-Study

The self-study consists of a two- to four-month analysis of the curricular as well as the schoolwide areas represented by the quality criteria:

Curricular Criteria

English-Language Arts
Mathematics
Science
History-Social Science
Visual and Performing Arts
Physical Education
English-as-a-Second Language
Foreign Language

Schoolwide Criteria

Students in Transition:
 The Culture of the Middle Grades
Instructional Practices
Student Support System
Improvement Processes

In-depth Areas

The leadership team in charge of planning and monitoring the self-study must choose three of the thirteen middle grades quality criteria for an in-depth analysis. The team may choose two curricular criteria and one schoolwide criterion or three curricular criteria. These criteria will be a primary focus during both the self-study and the program quality review. The review team will generate at least one suggestion for each of these areas; three of these suggestions will then be developed into action plans by the leadership team and the review team. The school is encouraged to develop at least tentative suggestions for improvement and action plans before the program quality review in order to facilitate the review team's work when it arrives. Although the review team has the prerogative of developing the final suggestions for the report of findings, developmental work by the leadership team beforehand will help ensure that the suggestions and action plans that result from the review are more thorough, well-conceived, and ambitious than would otherwise be possible.

The Committees and Leadership Team

The self-study is conducted by the principal, faculty, students, parents, school site council members, and interested community members. Committees are formed in order to provide a framework for the self-study. The chairpersons from the various committees are part of an overall leadership team which guides and monitors the self-study activities, considers all the information gathered during the self-study, and sets the direction for the action plans. The action plans, which are written during the PQR, describe the evidence that leads to suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the instructional program.

The self-study committees should parallel the quality criteria. The following is one possible configuration:

Curricular Committees

1. English-Language Arts or a humanities core including English-Language Arts and History-Social Science or Visual and Performing Arts
2. English as a Second Language and Foreign Language
3. Mathematics and Science (and Physical Education)

Note: Each curricular committee also applies the Instructional Practices Criterion

Schoolwide Committees

1. Students in Transition: The Culture of the Middle Grades
2. Student Support System
3. Improvement Processes
4. The Curriculum of the Middle Grades and Instructional Practices

APPLYING THE QUALITY CRITERIA

When applying the quality criteria, members of the school community should find the following suggestions helpful:

1. All staff members engaged in the self-study should become familiar with all the quality criteria by reading each criterion carefully and discussing questions about the major themes and key ideas.

2. Those applying the criteria should determine what procedures they will use and what specific information they wish to collect from their observations. When developing these procedures, self-study participants might ask: How will we follow individual students through their day at school? Which students should we follow? What classes should we observe and for how long? What, specifically, should we look for? Who should we talk to and about what? What students will be selected for shadowing? Shadowing is a major avenue for collecting information to determine the effect of the instructional program on student learning.

3. The quality criteria should be used as a guide when determining what information to collect and how that information is to be collected.

4. The leadership team should select three quality criteria for an in-depth review, e.g., three curricular criteria or two curricular criteria and one schoolwide criterion.

5. When self-study participants have collected their information, they should pool their findings in order to develop a common perspective of the program in operation and its impact on students.

6. As common perspectives have been shared and compared with the criteria, areas of the program that reflect each criterion are identified as "matches" or strengths; those that do not match the criteria are noted as "gaps" or areas for which improvements may be suggested and eventually developed into action plans.

7. When all areas of improvement are identified, agreement must be reached regarding changes that will become a top priority for an action plan for school improvement. Questions to ask at this stage might include: Which suggestions would have the greatest impact on the instructional program as a whole? Which would offer the greatest potential for success in the short run or in the long run? What changes are needed for specific groups of students, e.g., limited-English-proficient, underachieving, and special education students? In what sequence should they be approached?

8. The conclusions are shared with the school community as a whole as well as with the members of the outside review team during the next PQR.

To establish a "whole-school perspective," the leadership team, which is typically made up of the chairperson of each of the respective committees, the principal, and, if appropriate, a representative from the district office and/or school site council, reviews the findings of the committees and makes suggestions for improvements relative to the school as a whole. The most difficult tasks facing the leadership team are (1) to synthesize the information and perspectives developed by the committees; (2) to determine the "next best steps" the school community is to take based on the quality criteria; and (3) to organize that data into tentative suggestions and action plans so that a self-study summary can be shared first with the school's community and later with the visiting review team.

The School Data Summary

Each school has a wealth of data which, when organized and presented for comparison and interpretation, constitute the school data summary. These data provide a meaningful base of objective information on which to build judgments about school program quality.

The organization and interpretation of data in the school data summary should be guided by educated hunches, open-minded exploration of patterns, confirming interpretations with supporting evidence, and common sense. It is a practical process that makes the best use of available information but retains a healthy skepticism.

Indicators

The following indicators are suggested elements of the data summary because they are commonly available in schools and provide data valuable to program review and school planning. The

School Performance Report, both the locally produced and state-produced sections, may already include some of these elements. Each school should examine its own available data and select the best data for its summary.

Outcome indicators include:

- California Assessment Program data (third, sixth, and eighth grades)
  - Trends in raw scores
  - Percentile rank
  - Comparison to predicted score
  - Percent of students above Q3 and below Q1 over time
  - Skill area report comparing subareas of curriculum
  - Subgroup report showing trends over time
- Norm-referenced tests
  - Trends
  - Comparison to national norms
  - Curricular area comparisons
  - Percent of students above Q3 and below Q1 over time
- Criterion-referenced tests (including proficiency tests)
  - Percent of students achieving criterion levels
  - Trends
  - Work samples
  - Holistic criteria
  - Grade level standards
- Attendance and tardies
  - Attendance patterns of all students
  - Attendance patterns of specific groups
  - Tardiness patterns for all students
  - Tardiness patterns for specific groups
  - Staff attendance
- Number of books read
- Number of writing assignments completed
- Library/media use
- Students' opinions of school climate
- Number of students referred to principal

Program indicators include:

- Instructional time
  - Total school day
  - Allotted time by subject and by grade
  - Time engaged in learning (from observation)
  - Homework by grade
- Extracurricular activities
  - Number of students in sports
  - Number of students in music
  - Number of students in drama
  - Number of students in academic clubs

Student indicators include:

- Enrollment patterns
- AFDC count--increasing/decreasing
- LEP count--increasing/decreasing
- Parents' occupations
- Mobility/transiency of students

A combination of open-mindedness, common sense, and expert advice should be used in selecting data to include in the summary. The format should display information to facilitate making comparisons. Too much information can be just as confusing as too little. The summary should not cover every possible comparison among available data. Most data should be left in their natural forms, available for reference.

Data must be compared to some frame of reference. The most common comparisons useful to schools are:

- Previous program quality review results and programs
- Criterion levels based on rational goals
- Past years' levels for the same school
- Other curricular areas or subcomponents within a curricular area
- Groups of students
- Other grade levels
- District, state, and national averages

One of the most useful means for interpreting data is a knowledge of trends over time. It is helpful to have data for as many years (or other time points) as possible so that program effects can be distinguished from random fluctuations. Steady movement up or down over three or more years is usually an indication of real change. A one-year spurt is usually difficult to interpret and should not be relied on. One way of validating an apparent trend is to look for parallel patterns in related data. If reading achievement is improving across several different measures (e.g., CAP tests, district criterion-related tests, and number of books read), then it is safe to interpret these results as real improvement. If, on the other hand, results on only one measure are moving up and those on the others are constant or going down, alternative explanations must be seriously considered. The policy significance of trends can be illuminated by comparing these trends to the trends in other schools and in district, state, and national averages. Schools with assessment data that are not consistent with state and national trends are likely to be schools with powerful and unique programmatic or demographic influences on student outcomes.

In the development of strategies for improving the program, it is often useful to compare data among curricular areas or subcomponents of curricular areas. By themselves, these comparisons can be misleading, so it is advisable to tie them to a reference point by using trends; that is, by comparing trends among curricular areas. National, state, district, or even school test score averages can be used. Data from comparison schools can be used in the same way. Criterion levels established as school objectives can also provide a standard of comparison between areas. But since these criterion levels are difficult to justify empirically, their use for other comparisons is questionable.

Evaluating the performance of groups of students is very important for program planning. Comparison by groups can also be misleading when viewed in isolation. These same types of reference points can be used to tie down student group interpretations in the manner suggested for curricular areas. Trends can be compared for the high, middle, and low quartiles; for LEP students; and for the disadvantaged. Counts and proportions are often more useful than averages in looking at specific groups. Very often, a comparison of program data among different groups reveals differences in the treatment of students. These program differences can be evaluated to determine whether they are intentional or are the result of inadvertent inequities.

Comparisons with national, state, and district distributions and averages can be useful by themselves. Data from schools with similar background factors are sometimes available. Although comparisons with these schools can provide a sense of relative standing, matching is very dangerous and frequently misleading. These overall comparisons are more useful for setting goals and measuring progress than for discovering clues to program improvements.

The measures employed should be evaluated to determine how well they focus on program goals. It is easy to overvalue what is measured and undervalue what is truly important. An excellent assessment of an unimportant goal should not weigh as much in the decision-making process as a merely adequate assessment of a very important goal.

A very important consideration in interpreting data in curricular areas is the alignment of what is measured with what is taught or intended to be taught. Many tests overemphasize low-level skills and facts, while the current trends in curriculum are toward higher level skills, ideas, and concepts. State and national test developers are making changes in their tests to reflect this shifting emphasis in the curriculum, but each school should make sure the available data cover the curriculum as it is intended to be taught.

A related issue is the match of assessment method to what is being assessed. For example, an analysis and holistic judgment of work samples, demonstrations, and student presentations are often the best methods for addressing higher order thinking and communication skills. Teacher and textbook-related assessments generally match curriculum very well, although comparative data are not readily available. State and national tests provide excellent comparative information, although their fit to the school program is only general.

The Self-Study Report

Once all necessary information has been gathered, analyzed, discussed, and compared with the quality criteria, a summary of the self-study is developed. This report should convey a thoughtful and professional review of the schoolwide program and the curriculum areas defined in the quality criteria.

It should not be too lengthy, since a very large document may be filled with too much detail and may be too cumbersome to be meaningful to the school community.

The self-study report should include the following:

1. A written record of the result of comparing the school program with the issues, concepts, or ideas in each of the paragraphs of the quality criteria
2. A summative value judgment about the results of the above comparison
3. Identification of tentative suggestions and a tentative calendar for their implementation

4. Tentative action plans based on three of the suggestions developed in the three in-depth areas chosen for review

5. Recognitions of program strengths including aspects of the program in which there has been significant improvement

6. An analysis of the implementation of suggestions and assistance/action plans from any previous reviews

7. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the current self-study

The report will include the results of the self-study for each of the thirteen quality criteria. The section that includes the results of the self-study in the three areas selected by the school for in-depth review, i.e., two curricular and one schoolwide or three curricular criteria, should be more thorough than those for the other twelve areas. The conclusion reached in the other areas, however, will be of great value to each department in planning curricular, instructional, and organizational improvements.

Using the Self-Study During the Review

During the program quality review, the school's self-study is used as a basis for discussion about the school's program in operation at the site. It is sent to each member of the review team before the review so that it can be used to develop review strategies and ensure that important points are covered. As the review progresses, the review team will use the self-study as a guide in reviewing the school's program, validating the results of the self-study when the findings of the review team confirm the results, and seeking additional information when the self-study results and the team findings differ.

When the analytical portion of the review is complete, the leadership team and the review team will consider the identified areas of improvement within the self-study as they make recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the program and recognize areas of program strength.

PART III
THE MIDDLE GRADES PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS

GENERAL OVERVIEW

A school's program quality review (PQR) is a process by which the effectiveness of the curriculum, instructional program, and schoolwide organizational strategies is diagnosed by means of a set of standards that describe a high-quality program. This process allows judgments to be made about the effect of the program on the student populations at the school. The review, conducted by a team of educators not employed by the school district, typically occurs once every three years. Information about the school's program and its effect on the students is gathered by this visiting team primarily through observation of instruction; interviews with teachers, students, administrators, other instructional staff, and parents; and a review of pertinent documents. The team members then compare the information they gather with the state's quality criteria to determine the extent to which the program received by the student matches the descriptions of a high-quality program in the criteria.

The program quality review yields information that is essential to the effective development of the school's curriculum and instructional program--information about what is working well, why, and what should be changed. Program review is a valuable part in the improvement cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and modifying the planned program.

Purpose of the Program Quality Review

The primary purpose of PQR is to improve the quality of curriculum and instruction; it is a means for developing and sustaining a high-quality educational program for all students. For the school staff and parents, the review is a period in which to observe and discuss the effectiveness of the programs received by the students. The immediate benefits of this process are the decisions and plans to make specific improvements in the curriculum, instruction, and schoolwide organization.

The three major goals for the program quality review are:

Goal 1: Process. Improve student outcomes by stimulating a school community to do an analysis of its program through a self-study, use this information together with the results of the program quality review to plan for improvements, and implement the suggestions and action plans generated by the review.

Goal 2: Standards. Promote a high-quality curriculum, effective instruction, and a responsive school organization through the use of the quality criteria as standards of effective schooling for all student populations at the school.

Goal 3: Statewide Networking and Professionalism. Promote the networking of educators throughout California for the purpose of sharing successful practices and problem solving, developing collegiality, and supporting educational professionalism by giving them a critical role in the statewide school improvement effort.

The goals are accomplished when a school goes through the three phases of a program review, including the self-study that is carried out by the school community prior to the visit of an external review team; an intensive visit by an external review team, including review of the findings of the self-study; and planning and implementing future improvements based on the combined findings of the self-study and the external program quality review.

The Scope of the Program Quality Review

The program quality review described in this handbook focuses on the extent to which the school curriculum, instructional methodologies, and schoolwide organization contribute toward a high-quality educational program for each student.

The quality criteria used in the PQR address the two major aspects of a school program--curriculum and instruction and the schoolwide policies, practices, and procedures that shape and support the program.

Curricular criteria have been developed for the following subjects:

- English-Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- History-Social Science
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Physical Education
- English as a Second Language
- Foreign Language

The schoolwide criteria include:

- Students in Transition:
  The Culture of the Middle Grades
- The Curriculum of the Middle Grades
- Student Support System
- Instructional Practices
- The Improvement Processes

The Program Quality Review Team

The review team is made up of three to seven educators who have been certified by the California Department of Education as qualified reviewers. Reviewers are selected for their knowledge of curriculum, instructional methodologies, and special programs as well as for their outstanding interpersonal skills. Typically, they are teachers, departmental chairpersons, counselors, principals, or coordinators/directors of instruction from school districts, institutions of higher education, offices of county superintendents of schools, or, in some cases, the community. The majority of the team members, including the lead reviewer, must be from outside the school district that is requesting the review. Reviewers work together using the quality criteria to guide them in (1) gathering information about the school's program and the effects of the program on students; (2) forming a point of view about the workings of the school as compared to the quality criteria; and (3) developing a report to the school that includes findings, suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the program, recognition of the program's strengths, and action plans outlining the school's immediate next best steps for improvement.

Review Strategies

The review strategy is based on the quality criteria contained in this handbook. Through a combination of observations of the instructional program and its impact on students, interviews with students and staff at the school, and documented evidence presented to the review team, reviewers develop an understanding of the nature of the school program and its current effectiveness. Then, by comparing this understanding with the high-quality standards of the quality criteria, the reviewers can determine the matches and gaps between the quality criteria and the school's program.

Establishing an understanding of the school program requires an organized effort. The understanding is developed by having a clear idea of the school curriculum; by observing a sample of students through a case study approach; by analyzing a broad sample of current students' work; by summing up the comments of the instructional staff, the counseling staff, administrators, parents, and the students themselves as to their current and past activities; and by reviewing instructional and management material used throughout the school. This knowledge forms the basis for the reviewers' judgments of the effects of instruction on various student populations enrolled in the school.

Responsibilities of the Reviewers

The responsibilities of the reviewers are:

- To conduct the review thoroughly enough for the development of a clear and accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the instructional program
- To use that knowledge to make suggestions for increasing or sustaining the effectiveness of the program

In order to fulfill these responsibilities, each reviewer must also:

- Be fully conversant with the quality criteria and the process of program quality review.
- Review thoroughly the curriculum frameworks, handbooks, K-8 curriculum guides, and literature related to the areas to be reviewed.
- Put aside any bias toward any particular program or method.
- Use the school data summary and the self-study findings to facilitate discussions with school staff and parents. These discussions should cover the curriculum and instructional program; determine how well the program is working, and provide evidence sufficient to verify, extend, clarify, enrich, or repudiate those findings.
- Be able to reflect back to the school--as a mirror--the picture he or she has developed of the current effectiveness of the school program.
- Recognize and support the program improvement efforts of the school community.

As the reviewers begin to understand what is happening for the students, they also seek to find out what processes at the school have contributed to what is actually occurring. The reviewers seek explanations from the school staff members as to why they do things as they do, how curriculum decisions are made, how the instructional program was developed, how it is supported and improved, how plans are implemented, and so forth. This analysis forms the basis of the reviewers' suggestions for improving instruction and guides the development of the action plans.

As the reviewers complete the review, a report of findings is prepared and shared with selected staff members and the principal who make up the leadership team. The report provides two types of findings: (1) the extent to which the quality of each aspect of the reviewed program matches the standard of the quality criteria; and (2) identification of areas that appear to be ready for improvement.

After the initial report of findings is shared, the final report is prepared by the review team. It includes concrete suggestions for improving or sustaining the effectiveness of the instructional program and recognizes practices of high quality. In developing action plans with the leadership team, the reviewers identify those areas that need improvement and both the school staff and the reviewers collaboratively plan the school's next best steps for improvement. Local, county, regional, and state resources are considered in the development of the action plans. High-quality programs and practices are also noted in a section of the report entitled "recognition of program strengths."[1]

Responsibilities of the Leadership Team. The leadership team, a group of school representatives involved in the instructional program, is responsible for establishing a link between the review team and the school community. Members of the leadership team provide information to the review team in a way that enhances the development of a complete and cohesive picture of the school's curriculum and instructional programs.

The leadership team, usually five to seven in number, is designated by the principal. Members of the team are selected representatives from the classroom, curriculum or grade-level chairpersons, program coordinators, resource or specialist teachers, or any other school staff members who are a significant part of the school's planning process. District personnel, school site council (SSC) chairpersons, other committee or PTA chairpersons, and parents who are knowledgeable about the school's program may be included.

The leadership team members assist the school community and reviewers in all aspects of the program quality review. They also serve as leaders in the school's self-study process and assist the team in its information-gathering efforts during the review preparation meeting and other formal and informal ongoing meetings. Their responsibilities also include (1) building, in a collaborative effort with the review team, three suggestions into action plans; and (2) providing active leadership in the school's implementation of these plans after the team leaves.

Responsibilities of the School Community. While the review team is responsible for learning as much about the program as can be learned in a limited period of time, the school community is responsible for making sure that the team is gaining accurate and complete information about the program. A school community prepares for its program quality review by conducting a required self-study (Part II). A thorough review of its program, using the quality criteria, will enable the members to know how well their program is working and why. With this knowledge, the school community will be able to assist the reviewers in gathering accurate information about the program so that the findings of the review, especially the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program, will be complete.

The responsibilities of the staff, parents, and community members involved in a program quality review are:

- To know the curriculum and planned instructional program and how they affect the students
- To be familiar with the program quality review process and the quality criteria
- To be involved as a total staff in the self-study and in identifying program strengths and areas in need of improvement in relation to the quality criteria by spelling out activities that are working and those that are not
- To be ready to share this knowledge with the review team and to be able to direct reviewers to the information they need to fulfill their responsibilities

METHODOLOGY

The methods used in gathering information about the program include observation, interview, and documentation. Information gathered through each method is verified by information from one or both of the other sources. When combined, the data gathered from the three methods should form a complete picture of the program. The use of specific procedures should ensure that the review will be thorough and consistent. This view of the program is then compared with the quality criteria. From that comparison come the suggestions or recognitions of program strengths.

The criteria used for judging program quality describe the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and effectiveness strategies and their effects on the students. Each criterion contains features of a high-quality program. The reviewer's job is to determine to what extent each aspect of the program being reviewed matches the description of a high-quality program.

Throughout this process the reviewer will be guided by the quality criteria that identify areas of the program to be investigated and provide directions to reviewers for collecting information about the school program.

The Case Study Approach

As previously mentioned, the middle grade setting is a complex one for students as well as staff. To facilitate the ease with which a clear picture of the students' path through school is obtained, the review team will include a small sample of students as part of a case study. Through studying the activities and programs of the selected students, reviewers get a firsthand look at how all the elements of the middle grades setting come together for the student. From this vantage point the reviewer can determine what, out of all that the programs have to offer, is actually received by the student. Further, the case study provides information on what effects the curriculum, instructional methodologies, and organizational strategies have on students' learning. And, finally, through these case studies the reviewer will be able to make some projections about how the students' total program will come together by the time they become high schoolers.

Classroom Observation

Through classroom observations, the reviewers gather information about how the various instructional methods, the curriculum, and effectiveness strategies operate in the classroom setting. This information is collected to develop a complete understanding of the program and its effect on the student. Insight into the effects of the staff development activities, as well as instructional support and planning activities, also emerges through classroom observations. On entering the classroom, reviewers should spend a few minutes observing what is happening, remembering that they are putting together an initial picture rather than making a judgment at this point; that each impression will need to be verified through further observation and informal interview as well as through other sources; and that first impressions may be influenced by personal bias.

These initial observations should include:

- What the students are doing: Receiving instruction? Applying skills? Practicing newly acquired skills? Synthesizing and evaluating information? Waiting? Playing? Causing a disturbance?
- How the classroom is being managed: Is it task-oriented? Conducive to learning?

- Range of activities taking place from acquisition of knowledge to higher-level learning skills
- How students are grouped and how individual assistance is provided
- How much time the students actually spend on the assigned activity: Do they know what to do?
- How students are applying the skills being learned
- How students with special needs are participating and performing in the classroom activities
- How the instructional settings are varied according to the needs of the student and/or what is to be learned
- Any evidence of balance in the curriculum; i.e., visual and performing arts, history-social science, and science

The information gained through these observations is built on using the curricular and schoolwide criteria. Classroom observation includes informal interviews with students and staff, based on what has been observed, as well as the observation of activities.

Interviews

The basic information gained through reviewing the self-study and classroom observations is verified, clarified, and expanded through interviews. Interviews enable the reviewers to learn how the program came to be the way it is, as well as to better understand the program as it is.

By using what is known about the curriculum and instructional program thus far, reviewers conduct both informal and formal group interviews. Examples of informal interviews include asking questions of the students and teachers in the classroom, talking with instructional aides while they work with students, talking with teachers in the teachers' lounge, and so forth. Formal group interviews are conducted with teachers, instructional aides, councils/committees, district personnel, support staff, and volunteers.

The interviews serve several major purposes:

- Verifying data obtained from other sources
- Collecting data that have not been gathered from other sources
- Resolving conflicts in data collected
- Giving people the opportunity to share past experiences, present conditions, or future plans which the reviewers might not have uncovered
- Offering an opportunity for people to ask questions of the review team

Conversations with students who are part of the case study occur over the course of the review. They begin on the first day and provide an initial glimpse of the school through the language and experience of the student. As more of the program unfolds during the course of the review, the students will be called on again to offer additional information and perceptions to the reviewers. The object of these interviews is to learn as much as possible about the students' activities from the time they arrive at school until they leave, including extracurricular activities. Students are expected to describe daily activities rather than merely answer questions.

The reviewer will receive a copy of each student's daily schedule so that the reviewer can observe as many of the student's classes as possible during the course of the review. A general impression of the effect of the school on the student and the path he or she chooses can be formed from these observations. Additional information should include pertinent background information on the student, teachers' names, extracurricular activities, and other activities that occupy the student's time.

After the initial student interviews and during visits to the classrooms, the reviewer will continually relate what the student is doing to the program goals and objectives, course outlines, curriculum guides, and the students' own goals and future plans. During this process reviewers will again interview and continue to observe the selected students to help complete the picture.

The group interview in the middle grades setting allows the review team to discuss with similar groups (e.g., teachers in the mathematics and English departments) the key issues of curriculum, instructional methodology, the students' paths through the courses offered, staff development, and the school improvement process. As in the individual interviews, the team should base its questions on what has been learned so far. The interview should provide evidence to verify or modify the team's preliminary views and extend its knowledge of the situation at the school. Group interviews generally are scheduled for 30 to 45 minutes; however, the interviews with the teaching staff should last an hour or more.

Review of Data, Policies, and Other Documents

Documentation helps to verify, expand, and clarify what is learned through classroom observations and interviews. The information in the "School Data Summary" forms an initial base for the review since it contains a broad sample of information about the student population, adult and student expectations, the curricular point of view, achievement information, and other data. Reviewers should not read documents for the sake of establishing that such recordkeeping exists but rather for the purpose of developing a complete understanding of what the program in action is really like. A school, on the other hand, should not create documents for the review team but should share meaningful data, policies, and other records that are useful to staff and parents in forming the program and helping it to move forward.

PROCEDURES BEFORE THE REVIEW

Making the Arrangements

Scheduling, mailing of materials, and establishing liaisons between reviewers and the school district take place at the local level. Most districts will be affiliated with other districts with which they share personnel to provide a pool of trained, independent persons required for review teams. Most offices of county superintendents of schools provide coordination services to assist districts in the formation of a consortium or other types of affiliation. Although there will be a variety of such arrangements, for the sake of simplicity in explanation, this section will assume the existence of a consortium of districts and the existence of a person designated to coordinate program quality review activities in the consortium. The reader should make appropriate analogies to the circumstances of the particular district being reviewed.

The lead reviewer's involvement with the review of a particular school is initiated by the consortium's program quality review coordinator. The coordinator will orient the lead reviewer to the procedures being used in the consortium, to materials and in-service training the school staff has received, and to responsibilities for contacting district and school personnel.

Contacting the School

Consistent with the consortium's procedures, the lead reviewer will telephone the school principal to set up the program quality review. This call, usually a month before the review, should cover the following topics:

- Confirmation of schedule of events--times and dates of visits to the school by the lead and the full team
- Information the school should send to the reviewers ahead of time
- Information the school will receive ahead of time and how to get it
- Proposal of an agenda for the review preparation meeting by the reviewers, the principal, and the leadership team
- The three curricular criteria or two curricular criteria and one schoolwide criterion the school has chosen for an in-depth review
- Procedures used by the school in preparing for the review, including a mandatory self-study
- Procedures used by the team before, during, and after the review
- Clarification of any concerns or questions

Meeting of the Review Team

Prior to the review, the lead reviewer should contact other team members to conclude all arrangements of time, place, and materials. The lead reviewer should discuss with each team member his or her background and experience with program quality review. Expectations for review preparation should be clarified and the overall schedule of events and review strategies determined. Finally, the plans and expectations for the review preparation meeting with the leadership team should be discussed.

Preparing for the Program Quality Review

A successful program quality review depends on a thorough preparation on the part of the review team. In addition to completing the necessary arrangements, the team will read, study, and discuss a variety of materials prior to the initial meeting with the school principal and the leadership team. Some of these materials will be obtained through the consortium coordinator, while others will be obtained directly from the school. The basic set of materials includes:

- Middle Grades Program Quality Review Training Manual
- Quality Criteria for the Middle Grades: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review
- California Department of Education's handbooks, frameworks, and K-8 curriculum guides in the curriculum areas selected as a focus of the review
- Curriculum assessment results, goal statements, expectation statements, books in use, reading lists, achievements, and other materials as determined by the school and the district
- School plan

- School data summary including results from the previous program review
- Logistic information such as maps, schedules, staff roster, and so on

Study the curriculum materials. The curriculum materials prepared by the California Department of Education include state curriculum handbooks, frameworks, and K-8 curriculum guides. These materials will be reviewed by the team. The purpose of this review is to ground the review team in what state and national curriculum leaders believe makes a quality program in their area and to provide the background standards which will frame the discussions between the review team and the leadership team on curriculum issues. In addition, the review of the curriculum materials will help the team in the analysis and assessment of the school's curriculum and in the formulation of suggestions which will have the best results for school improvement.

The curriculum materials sent to the reviewers by the school--such as the goals and expectations, the school's curriculum assessment, the books in use in the classroom, required and elective reading lists, and so forth--should provide a sense of the curriculum offered by the school. It is important for the team members to be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of the curriculum offered when they first meet with the leadership team.

The reviewers will analyze how the curriculum offered by the school compares to the standards of the quality criteria and the expectations conveyed by the guides and handbooks in the curriculum materials prepared by the Department of Education. Curricular issues to be discussed at the review preparation meeting with the leadership team should be identified and framed for discussion.

In preparing for the discussion on curriculum, reviewers should ask the following questions:

- What is the balance of subjects taught every student?
- Are there major gaps in the curriculum?
- What kind of balance is there between skills development and content in each curricular area?
- What books are the students reading?
- How are writing and oral presentation incorporated in each curricular area?
- How are the skills of interpretation, inference, critical thinking, problem solving, evaluation, and other higher-order skills incorporated into all curricular areas?

Evaluating the materials with respect to these questions will help identify the curricular issues to discuss at the review preparation meeting. The discussion will help resolve some of the issues and provide an indication of strengths and areas of improvement to be confirmed by observation and interview.

Read the school plan. A careful review of the school plan (including the school budget), especially those curricular areas selected for in-depth review, helps the reviewers understand what the school priorities are, what the planned program is to accomplish, and how it will be accomplished.

Study the school data summary. The organization and interpretation of data in the school data summary should include demographic trends over time; student achievement patterns over time; attendance and other climate patterns over time; program evaluation reports; results from the previous program review; and district and school policies related to curriculum, instruction, staff development, and school planning. This information will provide a picture of trends in student achievement, student enrollment, and school climate. In addition, reviewers will learn something of what the district and school philosophy is and what leadership priorities and practices are by reading policy documents requested from the school.

PROCEDURES DURING THE REVIEW

Review Preparation Meeting with the Leadership Team

The meeting held to prepare for the review takes place the day before the review. The purpose of this meeting is to establish a common understanding among reviewers, the principal, the leadership team, and appropriate district staff of what to expect during the review. The meeting is chaired by the lead reviewer. The lead reviewer and the principal should discuss in advance the purpose, roles, and process of the meeting. The agenda should include the following items:

- School background. The principal briefs the team on the historical and social context of the school. Recent events that have had a significant impact on the school's life are described.

- Program quality review background. The lead reviewer briefs school staff on the history and purpose of program quality review. The basic review methodology is explained, and the roles of the team members are clarified.

- Self-study discussion. This is the most substantial item on the agenda and usually requires the most time. The discussion should move through five steps:

  1. Discussion of the highlights of the curriculum documents, the local materials, the model curriculum standards, and the quality criteria provided by the California Department of Education
  2. Discussion of the school's self-study process, including the results of the self-study in selected areas of the curriculum
  3. General discussion of the curriculum offered by the school and specific discussion of the two or more curriculum areas selected by the school for review
  4. Discussion of issues identified by the review team
  5. Establishment of expectations for the curriculum focus and strategy of the review

If the local view as to curriculum differs substantially from the view contained in the quality criteria or the model curriculum standards, the differences should be discussed. From this discussion should come a shared understanding of how curriculum differences will be managed during the review. Note: Because the quality criteria were developed with the help of major state and national curriculum organizations, representatives of local districts, and eminent scholars, substantive differences should be rare.

- School plan. The plan is discussed in order to determine how agreements about curricular instructional methodologies, the school's goals, and other issues were developed and are expected to be implemented.

- School performance report. The leadership team and the review team discuss their interpretation of the data and information in the report, including past trends and future aspirations. The analytical values of data are discussed as to what areas are to be focused on and what strategy is to be used.

- Agreement on strategy and focus. Next, agreement is reached on the basic strategies the team will follow and the three areas where an in-depth review will be conducted.

- Schedule of events. Final scheduling and logistics are worked out.

Introductory Meeting with the School Staff

If the principal and leadership team believe it would be advantageous to the review process, arrangements can be made for a short, informal meeting of the school staff and the reviewers prior to the beginning of classes on the first morning of the review.

During this meeting the reviewers would:

- Share the purpose of the review
    - Compare the school program with the quality criteria to determine the effectiveness of the instructional program.
    - Recognize the program's strengths.
    - Make suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program.
- Alert staff members to the procedures that will be followed.
    - Observe each classroom included in the review, have informal discussions with students and staff members, and review students' work.
    - Review the instructional program received by a sample of students.
    - Conduct group interviews with teachers, counselors, support staff, paraprofessionals, councils/committees, parents, and the district's office staff, as appropriate.
    - Review the curriculum materials, the results of the self-study, student achievement and other outcome data, schoolwide policies and procedures, and the school plan.
    - Issue the report of findings.

Visits to the Classroom

The reviewers work with the school staff to ensure that all appropriate classrooms are visited and that resource specialist rooms, learning laboratories, media centers, and other areas where regular and special learning activities occur are visited when appropriate.

Through classroom observation, which includes informal interviews with students and staff, the reviewers gather information about how the curriculum, instructional methods, and organizational strategies operate in the classroom setting. Such observation can also provide insight into the effects of staff development, instructional support, and planning activities. On entering the classroom, reviewers should spend a few minutes observing what is happening, remembering that they are forming an initial picture rather than making a judgment; that each impression will need to be verified through further observation and informal interviews as well as through other sources; and that first impressions may be nfluenced by personal bias.

Questions that might be asked include the following:

- What are the students doing? Receiving instruction? Applying skills? Synthesizing and evaluating information? Waiting? Causing a disturbance?
- How is the classroom being managed? Is it conducive to learning? Is it academically focused? Is instructional time wasted?
- What is the range of activities--from acquisition of knowledge to higher-level learning skills and application
- How is assistance being provided?
- How much time do the students spend on the assigned activity? Do they know what to do? Are homework assignments done in class?
- How are different student populations in a classroom being addressed? To what degree are they participating and performing compared to their peers? Are they all learning the core curriculum?
- To what extent are instructional settings varied according to the needs of the student and/or what is to be learned?

Interviews

Collecting information requires cross-validating observations, interviews, and documentation to verify, clarify, and expand information gained about the school program and how it impacts students. In addition, interviews provide opportunities for district and school staff and community members to ask questions of the review team and share additional experiences--past, present, and future--to form a better perspective of the school's visions and progress.

Documentation

The use of documents such as statistical data, school policies, schedules, and results of the previous review, form an initial base of information that can be used to further verify, clarify, and expand findings throughout the review via observations and interviews.

Application of the Quality Criteria

The quality criteria are of two kinds--those that address specific curricula areas and those that address schoolwide program elements. Reviewers will note that while each criterion focuses on a specific part of the program, there are common themes that thread through each of the sets of criteria. In applying the curricular criteria, reviewers will observe instruction, review students' work, and talk to students and instructional staff members to determine for each curricular area being reviewed:

- What constitutes the curriculum, including:
    - What is to be learned (as documented by the written goals and objectives of the curriculum)

  - What is being taught
  - What students are learning

- The extent to which lessons and assignments, including instructional strategies, material, media, equipment, and so forth, are appropriate to:
  - The curriculum to be learned
  - The needs of the students

- The extent to which lessons and assignments:
  - Extend beyond rote learning to application of what is being learned.
  - Employ the fundamental basic skills in acquiring curricular knowledge.
  - Challenge students to think and communicate their thoughts.
  - Enable students with special needs to succeed in the core curriculum.

Application of the Schoolwide Criteria

In applying the schoolwide criteria, reviewers will talk to staff members, observe them at work, observe the interactions among staff members and students, and observe the operations of the school program to determine schoolwide effects on learning. Reviewers will determine:

- The extent to which the culture of the school revolves around the joy and importance of learning
- The degree of alignment of the allocation of human and material resources, including staff development efforts, with curricular and instructional goals
- The extent to which the school is actively engaged with the parents and the wider school community in common support of school and community goals
- The presence of a viable, ongoing school improvement process

Development of Suggestions, Action Plans, and Recognitions of Program Strengths

Suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the school's program will be framed by the review team members as they compare what has been learned about the program and its impact on students to the quality criteria. These suggestions will be reviewed by the leadership team. Both teams will select three suggestions from the three in-depth criteria to be developed into action plans. These plans will identify comprehensive activities that will have the greatest impact on the program and will lead to improved effectiveness in many areas. In addition, these plans will include a variety of strategies for implementation, inclusion of resources (human, material, fiscal), designation of responsible person(s) for implementation of activities, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and time frames or completion dates.

A calendar of implementation for the remaining suggestions will be developed collaboratively by the PQR team and the school's leadership team. Activities may or may not be included, depending on available time at that point in the review.

In developing recognitions of program strength, the review team will consider the following criteria:

- A program or an aspect of a program that reflects the high quality in the quality criteria
- An aspect of the program in which significant improvement has occurred
- A high-quality program that is in place for all students
- Collected information that supports and warrants the recognition

These criteria make it possible to recognize outstanding programs or aspects of programs that are in place at a school. The term recognition of program strength is used in lieu of commendation and requires supporting evidence related to the quality criteria. Individuals should not be singled out for this recognition.

Cautions About Applying the Quality Criteria

No matter how well designed the procedure or how well prepared the reviewer, there will always be difficulties in judging program quality. Reviewers should be aware of these difficulties and the potential consequences of each.

Overgeneralizing. Necessarily, the review is limited to a sample of situations for a given point in time, curriculum content, students, and so on. Merely assuming that this limited sample is typical is a mistake of overgeneralization. To avoid overgeneralization, the initial impressions from observed samples must be supported by relating what students are doing to the work they are producing. This current work is then related to samples of past work from the last several weeks. The observed activities and students' work are discussed with the teacher, and explanations of how the activities fit in with the overall program for the year are requested. The teacher's explanation is an important step in generalizing. Finally, observations in the various classrooms should be related to schoolwide programs and plans for programs. Reviewers should discuss this relationship with the teacher, with people active in planning, and with school leaders, especially the principal. By fitting observation and explanation together in this way, it is possible to construct a historical picture of the school program and tie it to the observed experiences of students. It is this picture and the tie to students which provide the framework for generalizing from specific, observed data.

Considering all student populations. In judging the extent to which each aspect of the program matches the standards of the quality criteria, reviewers must consider all student populations. When virtually all student populations receive curriculum and instruction as described in the quality criterion, that aspect of the program is recognized as high quality. If, however, a specific population of students were receiving curriculum and instruction of quality lower than that described in the criterion, the review team would frame a suggestion for improving the quality of program received by those students.

Too impressionistic. While initial impressions are a valuable guide for pursuing a line of investigation, they should be validated or rejected by careful examination of appropriate evidence. This evidence should include teachers' explanations, students' work, or classroom observation. Initial impressions can be based on situations which are not typical of the school. Reviewers are cautioned not to let these impressions color the review without verifying them.

Too analytical. The reviewer should not just charge through the school as an active information gatherer, ferreting and figuring the whole time. This can lead to collecting data simply for the sake of collection rather than looking for the qualitative effect on the program. Reviewers should give the school an opportunity to disclose itself in its own way. Reviewers should, therefore, spend some time quietly allowing the atmosphere and tempo at that school to present itself.

Personal bias for or against specific materials or programs. Use the criteria and procedures in this manual. Reviewers should keep in mind that what would not work in one situation may work in another. Reviewers must be certain to observe how a program works for the school, rather than judging how it would or did work for them. Just because a program was best for a reviewer at his or her school does not mean that it should be judged as effective in another school.

False positive. This costly mistake occurs when a school staff is doing a poor or mediocre job, and the reviewer tells them they are doing a very good job. When this mistake is made, the incentives for improvement are undermined and the arguments for maintaining the status quo are reinforced by the review.

False negative. Although this mistake can be most upsetting, it is not always as bad as the false positive. Schools which are found to be effective but not up to the quality criteria are often upset that they did not receive a top finding (just as students used to getting A's complain the most over B+ grades). In many cases, these schools are strong and confident enough in their self-study to brush off the effect of a false negative. In some cases, however, especially in schools which have made progress in developing more effective programs, a false negative rating can be demoralizing.

Reinforcing facades. An error is reflected when the PQR process collapses into a game. While concern for fairness is very important, it is less important than concern for the real job of educating students.

Overattention to the technology and procedures of program quality reviews may subvert the intended effects on education and create a "fair" but expensive and wasteful game. Some school and district personnel complain that trying to do well on the PQR forces them to waste time building facades instead of teaching the students. Reviewers should not reinforce facade building in schools which want to do well. Reviewers should concentrate on students' learning rather than on the paraphernalia of instruction.

Ongoing Discussion with the Leadership Team.

During the review, several times will be set aside for informal and/or formal discussions with the leadership team. These meetings serve to keep everyone abreast of:

- How the review is proceeding
- Areas in which information is incomplete or missing
- Scheduling problems
- Feedback on what has been learned about the program so far

In addition, the meetings provide an opportunity for the team to receive feedback about how the review is being perceived by the school community and to receive additional information.

Ongoing Meetings of the Review Team

Throughout the review, the reviewers must meet frequently to ensure consistency in their perceptions of the program, the process of review, and their concepts of areas for improvement.

The times that have been found to be most productive for meetings of reviewers are:

- Following the first few classroom visits--to establish commonality of observation
- Preceding group interviews--to determine questions to be explored and issues to be raised
- At the end of each day of the review--to discuss quality findings and suggestions for those aspects of the program needing no further clarification and to design strategies for collecting additional information and/or resolving conflicts in information
- Preceding the preliminary report to the leadership team, at which time quality judgments and suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program are prepared and the roles determined for the report to be made to the leadership team. By the end of this meeting, suggestions should be framed, based on what has been learned about the school.

How the Report Is Developed

Preparation for the report of findings is concurrent with the process of program quality review since the report is based on all the information the review team and leadership team have gathered through the investigatory methods of observation, interview, and review of documents.

Conferences of the review team members, held throughout the review, form a basis for the report. A picture of the school emerges from these conferences as reviewers:

- Identify areas that require more information and plan strategies to collect it through observation, interview, and discussions with the leadership team.
- Review the school plan and all documented information gathered during the visit.
- Compare information collected with the key ideas in the quality criteria.
- Identify potential areas for suggestions, recognizing the school's own improvement process.
- Identify the local and regional assistance resources by curricular areas so that suggestions may be coupled with the action plans.
- Decide on the order of the preliminary report to the leadership team, how the discussion is to be guided and by whom, and the responsibility each reviewer will take.

Development of the Report of Findings

Early on the last day of the review, after all observations and interviews have been completed, the review team will meet with the principal and the leadership team members who attended the review preparation meeting. This meeting has four objectives:

- To report findings and suggestions
- To select the three suggestions that will be developed into action plans
- To complete, in a collaborative effort, the development of the selected suggestions. (This is done by elaborating the general suggestions prepared by the review team with concrete details specific to the school and its planning and implementation processes.)
- To plan the best way of presenting findings to the entire staff

During the development of the report with the leadership team, the review team presents what it found when the members compared the quality criteria to what they had learned about the program and its impact on the students. Questions about these findings will be answered, information verified, and the analytical portion--the information the team has collected that seems to identify what is preventing a high-quality program--of the report of findings will be framed. The cooperation and collaboration of the leadership team are essential in providing suggestions that are meaningful and are likely to produce results and in providing a bridge between the review team and the rest of the school community so that perceptions are viewed as valid.

It is important for all involved to recognize that the report of findings is developed at a working meeting. After the major findings of review are shared and discussed and the team's recognitions of program strengths and suggestions are presented, the main task of the meeting can be addressed--determining which three suggestions will be fully developed into action plans and which will remain suggestions. In a mutual effort the review team and the leadership team will build the selected suggestions into action plans. Also, a tentative calendar of implementation for the remaining suggestions will be developed during the review. The completed action plans will include proposed activities, strategies for implementation, resources needed, a calendar, persons responsible for implementation, and ongoing planning and evaluation activities. Finally, these suggestions and action plans are woven into the report of findings as a working document to be used by the school to guide further improvement efforts.

The lead reviewer must conduct the developmental meeting in a way which elicits involvement from school staff. Many schools will be knowledgeable about PQR practices and procedures and will be ready to take an active collaborative role in the process. At other schools, the leadership team will want the review team to assume the majority of the responsibility for reporting to the school and framing the action plans. It is the responsibility of the lead reviewer and the team members to assess the readiness of the leadership team to participate in the report of findings and to plan activities in accordance with the abilities of the staff.

Report of Findings

The report is both a written and oral presentation, delivered at the conclusion of a program quality review, which grows out of a discussion of review findings between the review team and the leadership team. It is the means through which the analytical portion of the review is linked to assistance resources within the school, district, county, and region and is then communicated to the school community. It is the most critical element of the entire review process.

The report communicates the following major elements:

- Written feedback regarding the school's self-study process, product, and recommendations for improvement
- A summary statement that addresses student and school performance data reflecting a match between the data and the report of findings
- A brief analysis of the school's implementation of the action plans and suggestions from the previous review
- The summary of findings of the school's curriculum and instructional program compared to the quality criteria
- The action plans and suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the planned program, including the resources available for supporting the action plan
- The review process as a model for collecting and analyzing information about the planned program in a way that results in improvements in the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional methodologies

These elements are woven together to provide information to the school as to how the effectiveness of the program can be sustained and/or increased.

A successful report of findings is a stimulus for continuing program improvement. It not only confirms and extends the knowledge that staff and parents have about their program but also assists the school in gathering and organizing resources supportive of the school's plan for improvement.

The information the review team has gathered at the site, its best judgments about the quality of the curriculum and instruction, and the suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the instructional program are communicated in two phases:

- During the development of the report of findings with the leadership team, the team recounts its findings, plans the best way to present these findings to the staff, and collaborates on the development of selected suggestions into action plans.
- The report of findings, offered at an open meeting of the entire staff, district representatives, council members, parents, and community members, communicates implementation progress from the previous reviews, school data analysis, self-study feedback, the results of the analysis of the school's curriculum and instructional program, recognitions of program strengths, suggestions, and action plans that address selected suggestions in a way that encourages efforts to continue program improvement.

This two-phase reporting sequence helps determine that:

- The analysis of program quality will be presented in such a way as to encourage improvement efforts at the school.
- The suggestions and developed calendars are appropriate and are likely to yield positive results.
- The action plans will be complete and fully understood by staff and reviewers.
- The leadership team and school site council will become actively involved in the review and improvement procedures so that they may use similar methods when other curricular areas are to be reviewed within the school's own self-study process.

73 50

Delivery of the Report of Findings

Following the developmental meeting with the leadership team and the joint development of selected suggestions into action plans, the report of findings is presented to the remainder of the school staff, parents, and district office and community members.

This report may be presented by the review team or a combination of the review team and the leadership team. The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the findings of the review to the school community.
- Provide the supporting evidence that contributed to the analysis of the program.
- Present the suggestions. Expand on the written statements by sharing the ideas and recommendations of the review team and the leadership team on how the school staff and parents can use the planning/evaluation process in their school plan and for continued program improvement.
- Describe the action plans.

The final and lasting impression at the school will be a professional, clear presentation that effectively recounts the analysis of the planned program, reports the findings of the program quality review, recognizes the strengths of the program, and frames the school's improvement efforts through appropriate suggestions.

In presenting the report, the review team and participating leadership team members will:

- Emphasize that the review is of the whole planned program, not of individual classrooms or particular parts of the program.
- Explain how the quality criteria are used and how they relate to each other.
- Recognize the effort expended by staff and others in implementing the program and/or their effort in improving their program.
- Present the findings, recognitions of program strengths, suggestions for increasing program effectiveness, and the action plans developed collaboratively by the review team and leadership team.
- Provide feedback to the school on the strengths and weaknesses of their self-study.
- Review the analysis of the implementation of the suggestions and action plans generated by the previous review.
- Thank the school community for its hospitality.

PROCEDURES AFTER THE REVIEW

Action Plans in School Plans

The report of findings is a significant portion of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the school program for the purpose of modifying the school-level plan. Well written action plans should be of significant scope and detail that they can be lifted from the report and placed in the school plan. Action plans should contain a calendar of activities, designate responsibility, identify supporting resources, and include an evaluation component.

Roles of School Site Council and Leadership Team

In School Improvement schools, the school site council (SSC) assumes an active part in monitoring the follow-up activities that will grow out of the formal program quality review process and the report of findings. In all schools the leadership team should take an active role in the implementation of the suggestions as well as the action plans.

The school site council and the leadership team could develop a yearly written report that describes:

- The progress being made in implementing action plans and suggestions
- The role played by school and district personnel in implementation
- How implementation of the program has affected student experiences and/or the school organization
- Action plans and suggestions that have **not** been implemented and the reasons why implementation did not take place

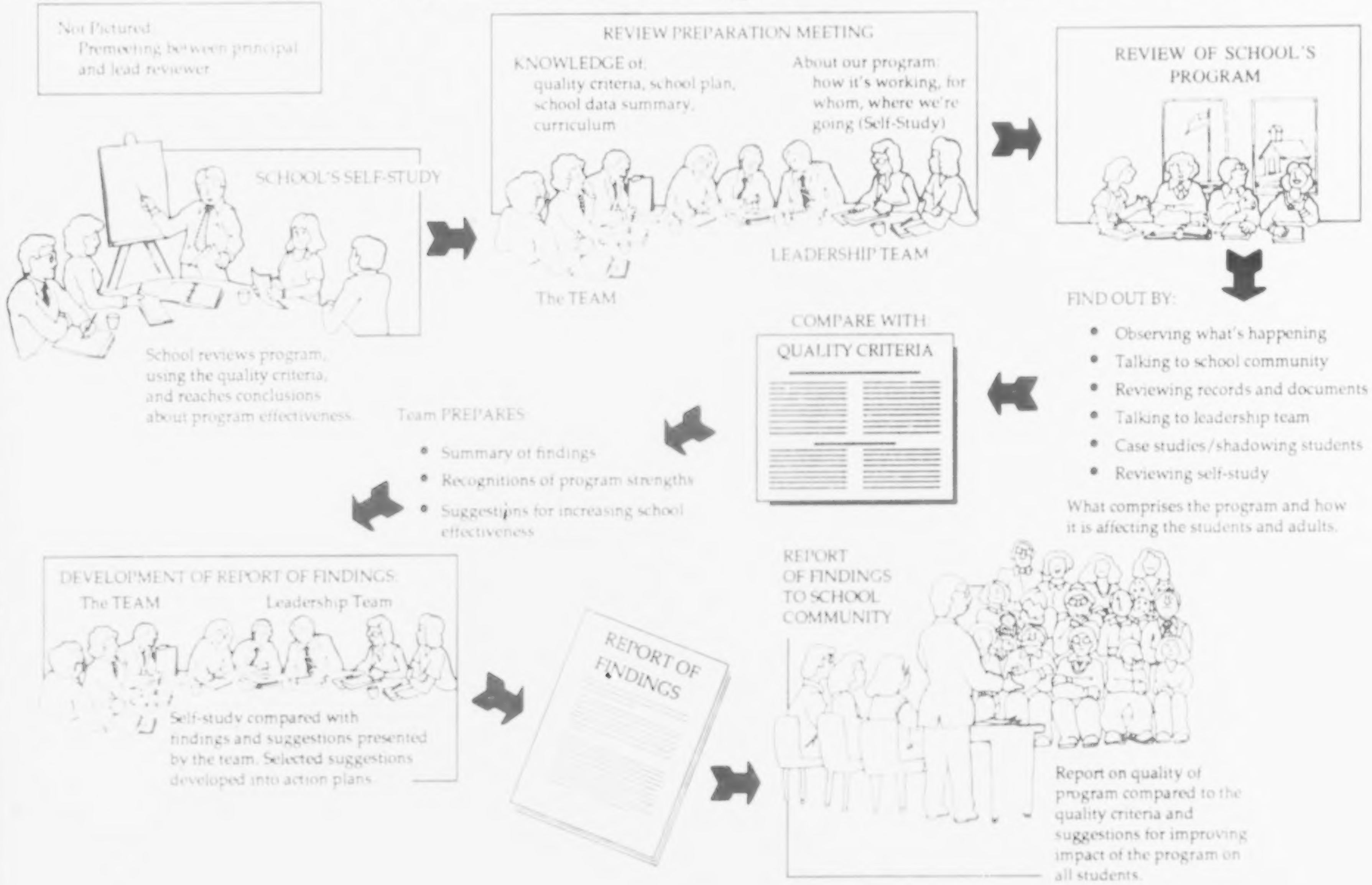
Copies of the report could go to the membership of the school site council and leadership team, school staff, school community groups, district office, local board of education, consortium coordinator, and the California Department of Education.

Role of School and District Staff

The decisions about who will assist in implementing recommendations or modifying the planned program rest with the scholl and the district staff. For follow-up assistance in implementing the action plans for program improvement, the school personnel contact their district resources, offices of county superintendents of schools, the California Department of Education, private or public institutions, staff development centers within their areas, or whatever they decide would be best for them.

Program quality reviews are monitored by the California Department of Education, and the results are used to provide assistance to schools, districts, offices of county superintendents of schools, and regional resources.

THE PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS



Not Pictured:
Premeeting between principal and lead reviewer

SCHOOL'S SELF-STUDY

School reviews program, using the quality criteria, and reaches conclusions about program effectiveness.

REVIEW PREPARATION MEETING

KNOWLEDGE of:
quality criteria, school plan, school data summary, curriculum

About our program:
how it's working, for whom, where we're going (Self-Study)

The TEAM

LEADERSHIP TEAM

REVIEW OF SCHOOL'S PROGRAM

FIND OUT BY:

- Observing what's happening
- Talking to school community
- Reviewing records and documents
- Talking to leadership team
- Case studies/shadowing students
- Reviewing self-study

What comprises the program and how it is affecting the students and adults.

COMPARE WITH:

QUALITY CRITERIA

Team PREPARES:

- Summary of findings
- Recognitions of program strengths
- Suggestions for increasing school effectiveness

DEVELOPMENT OF REPORT OF FINDINGS:

The TEAM

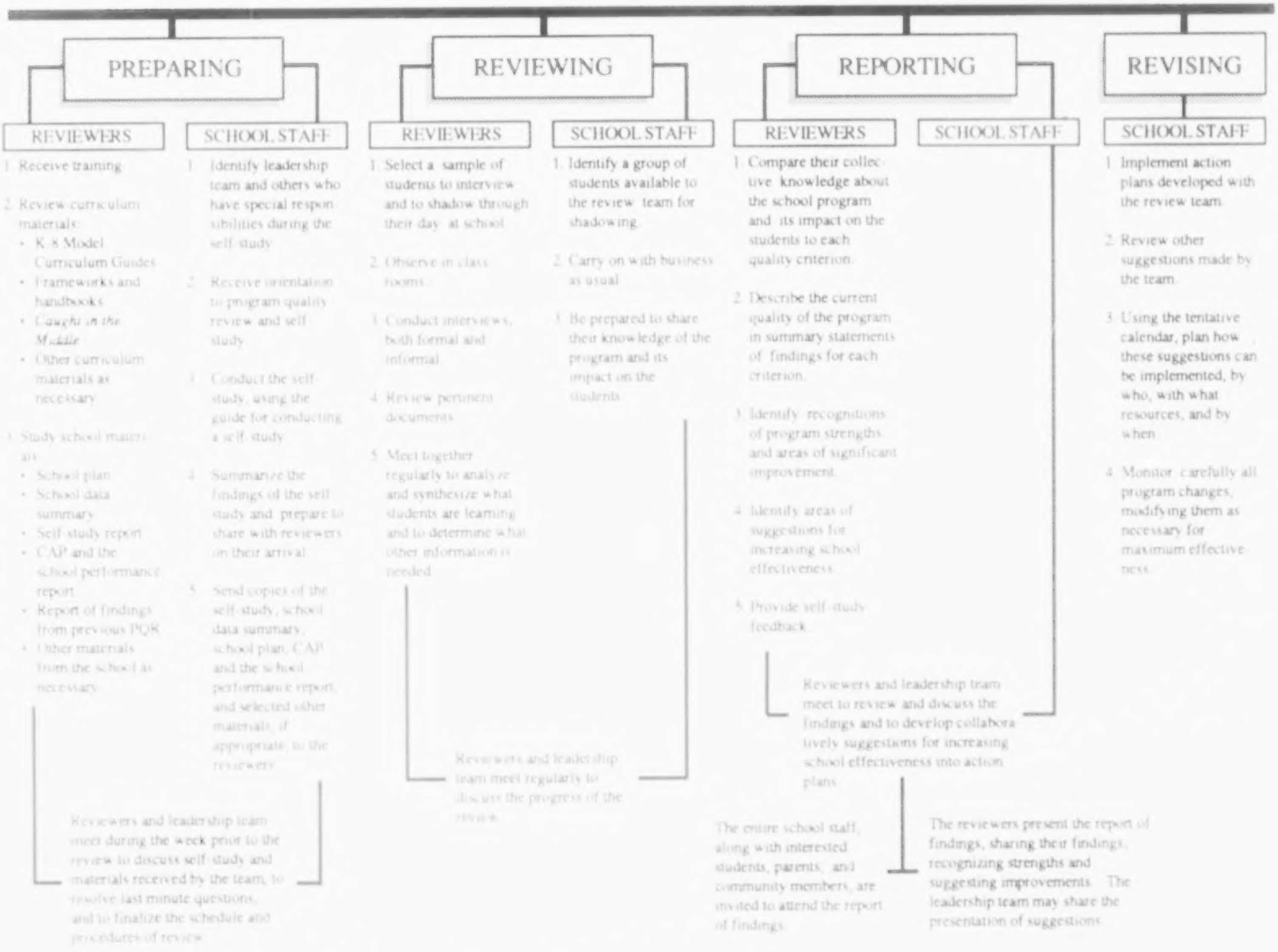
Leadership Team

Self-study compared with findings and suggestions presented by the team. Selected suggestions developed into action plans.

REPORT OF FINDINGS TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Report on quality of program compared to the quality criteria and suggestions for improving impact of the program on all students.

FOUR STAGES OF PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW PROCESS FOR MIDDLE GRADES



PREPARING

REVIEWERS

1. Receive training.
2. Review curriculum materials:
   - K-8 Model Curriculum Guides
   - Frameworks and handbooks
   - *Caught in the Middle*
   - Other curriculum materials as necessary
3. Study school materials:
   - School plan
   - School data summary
   - Self-study report
   - CAP and the school performance report
   - Report of findings from previous PQR
   - Other materials from the school as necessary

SCHOOL STAFF

1. Identify leadership team and others who have special responsibilities during the self-study.
2. Receive orientation to program quality review and self-study.
3. Conduct the self-study, using the guide for conducting a self-study.
4. Summarize the findings of the self-study and prepare to share with reviewers on their arrival.
5. Send copies of the self-study, school data summary, school plan, CAP and the school performance report, and selected other materials, if appropriate, to the reviewers.

Reviewers and leadership team meet during the week prior to the review to discuss self-study and materials received by the team, to resolve last minute questions, and to finalize the schedule and procedures of review.

REVIEWING

REVIEWERS

1. Select a sample of students to interview and to shadow through their day at school.
2. Observe in classrooms.
3. Conduct interviews, both formal and informal.
4. Review pertinent documents.
5. Meet together regularly to analyze and synthesize what students are learning and to determine what other information is needed.

SCHOOL STAFF

1. Identify a group of students available to the review team for shadowing.
2. Carry on with business as usual.
3. Be prepared to share their knowledge of the program and its impact on the students.

Reviewers and leadership team meet regularly to discuss the progress of the review.

REPORTING

REVIEWERS

1. Compare their collective knowledge about the school program and its impact on the students to each quality criterion.
2. Describe the current quality of the program in summary statements of findings for each criterion.
3. Identify recognitions of program strengths and areas of significant improvement.
4. Identify areas of suggestions for increasing school effectiveness.
5. Provide self-study feedback.

SCHOOL STAFF

Reviewers and leadership team meet to review and discuss the findings and to develop collaboratively suggestions for increasing school effectiveness into action plans.

The entire school staff, along with interested students, parents, and community members, are invited to attend the report of findings.

The reviewers present the report of findings, sharing their findings, recognizing strengths and suggesting improvements. The leadership team may share the presentation of suggestions.

REVISING

SCHOOL STAFF

1. Implement action plans developed with the review team.
2. Review other suggestions made by the team.
3. Using the tentative calendar, plan how these suggestions can be implemented, by who, with what resources, and by when.
4. Monitor carefully all program changes, modifying them as necessary for maximum effectiveness.

PART IV

THE PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW CRITERIA

The criteria in this document incorporate the philosophy of middle grades education as highlighted in Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools, 1988. They were developed jointly by the middle grades program quality review task force and the California Department of Education.

CURRICULAR CRITERIA

- English-Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- History-Social Science
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Physical Education
- English as a Second Language
- Foreign Language

SCHOOLWIDE CRITERIA

- Students in Transition: The Culture of the Middle Grades
- Curriculum of the Middle Grades
- Instructional Practices
- Student Support System
- Improvement Processes

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS

The English-language arts criterion promotes a meaning-centered literature program which is planned and developed for all students. Through such a program students gain (1) a solid body of knowledge derived from a common cultural heritage reflecting the contributions of the diverse ethnic and racial groups that make up the United States; (2) experiences in confronting important human issues; (3) personal, ethical, social, and aesthetic values; and (4) effective listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The program includes (1) the study of significant literary works; (2) instruction which builds on students' interests, skills, prior knowledge, and experiences; (3) the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (4) the effective use of these four processes in all areas of the curriculum; and (5) reading in all content areas and writing across the curriculum.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Curriculum	
Significant literature is the basis of the English-language arts program in which core works from a variety of genres selected to accommodate a variety of cultural perspectives, individual tastes, developmental concerns, and personal experiences are studied in depth by students. Human dilemmas and values are confronted, and higher level thinking skills are employed as students derive and convey meaning in order to clarify their own understanding of basic human values.	A skill-based, worksheet-oriented program is provided in which skills are taught in isolation and deal primarily with concerns of reading levels and superficial treatments of values in safe, diluted, or sterile texts dealing with trivial subjects or condescending themes.
The middle grades curriculum is part of a systematic, articulated K-12 program with outcomes resulting in new insights into the human condition, knowledge that adds to students' emerging world view, ability to think critically about ideas and concepts, independence in using the language arts tools, and pleasure from reading quality literature for its own sake.	No grade-level continuity is evident. The curriculum is fragmented from grade to grade or school to school.

Skills are taught in context and the language arts processes of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interrelated and serve as tools for learning as students bring their prior knowledge to bear on comprehending text. Students receive direct instruction regarding the conventions of language when these have not already been acquired through reading and oral discourse.	Skills are taught one at time and as ends in themselves without connection to students' prior experiences and the expectation that these skills will add up to students' ability to read and write well.
Instruction	
All students, including LEP, gifted, compensatory education, and special education, experience common, comprehensive, academically oriented, core curriculum irrespective of primary language or ethnic background.	The program separates students into categories and is remedial in nature, accelerated for only a few, or disconnected in concept and approach.
Through large group settings, collaborative groups, and partners, they discuss ideas and values in core and other literary texts with the focus of instruction on helping them develop new insights into their own lives and those of others.	Skill sheets are central to the curriculum. Students passively complete skill sheets and read controlled vocabulary stories in order to develop correct speech and written products and comprehend single interpretations. Formalistic teaching of literature as the study of plot, character development, and thematic interpretation prevails. LEP and other minority students do not experience the common core curriculum.
A range of thinking skills taught in the context of worthwhile literature is essential to instruction. A wide range of thinking develops as students read, write about, and discuss the meanings they discover through this literature.	Thinking is perceived as distinct, separate, and hierarchically arranged levels. Thinking instruction is separated from the language processes and content.
Students in all subjects learn to use the writing process flexibly, with attention to the different strategies necessary for the different kinds of writing seen in the real world. The sequence of writing instruction begins with encouraging fluency and content before correctness of form.	Only low-level writing tasks are taught, often without purpose and separate from students' ideas. Students are taught formulas for written products, e.g., the 5-paragraph essay and the paragraph with a fixed topic sentence. The purpose is correctness according to predetermined adult standards.
Oral language proficiency is encouraged through a variety of individual and group listening and speaking activities in settings where meaning is sought and negotiated from literature.	Only the best students are encouraged to speak and the activities are not connected to reading and writing. Opportunities for self-expression in individual and group settings are limited. Verbalization consists of one-word responses to teacher's questioning.

School Environment	
Teachers of all subjects encourage mastery of the language arts skills. They introduce and model the reading, writing, and thinking strategies students are to employ.	Instruction in the language arts skills is relegated to the reading and English teachers. Teachers and other adults in the school infrequently share their reading and writing with students.
The entire school community supports and models the effective use of all the language arts.	Members of the school community demean the importance of language arts skills and serve as poor models.
Home Environment	
The school promotes a home environment in which parents serve as good models and help their youngsters with their school work by providing a safe environment conducive to learning. They are supportive of their school work and engage in reading, writing, and speaking activities with them.	The school does little to solicit help from parents who are passive with regard to their youngsters' language use and school work. They do not provide a home environment conducive to developing good study habits and minimize the importance of learning and schooling.
Staff Development	
The school in-service education programs address the development of a broad background in literature, methods appropriate to a literature-based curriculum, research on learning, and resources offering help in the design and implementation of English-language arts program.	Teacher in-service education is rare and is focused on instructional methodology and the teaching of isolated language skills. Knowledge of subject matter is not emphasized.
Assessment	
The assessment program reflects the purposes of the curriculum. It covers the full range of goals of the English-language arts program, aligns with what students are expected to learn, and provides alternate strategies and forms of testing. Assessment is based on students' work over time and relies on their written and oral work and not just objective testing during and following the completion of their work.	The assessment program emphasizes the testing of narrowly focused, isolated, or low-level skills. Prominence is given to objective tests following a period of instruction.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

All students learn the language arts in a full, balanced, and integrated curriculum which is literature-based, meaning-centered, and which draws on students' experiences. The curriculum enables students to gain knowledge and acquire skills through a planned developmental program which helps them to achieve cultural literacy and become aware of values, ethics, customs and beliefs. The processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated in a total learning program. All students receive teacher-directed and student-centered instruction which helps them to comprehend, appreciate, and respond to significant core literary works. They come to value the four language arts processes as tools for clarifying, expressing, and learning new ideas in all curricular areas. Thinking skills are developed through the use of language arts across all areas of the curriculum.

LITERARY WORKS

The school has established a literature program divided into three major categories: core, extended, and recreational-motivational. The core program includes works of literary merit that have been carefully selected by curriculum planners and teachers. These works are central to every student's instruction and are given intensive attention on a classwide basis. Teachers help students experience these literary works through careful and in-depth reading as well as through other avenues such as hearing them read aloud, in part or as a whole, or in seeing them performed on stage or screen. They then use them as motivators of classroom discussion and students' writing. The titles selected for the core list include all genres, so that students experience a representative sampling of our literary heritage in a systematic program which is articulated among all grade levels. Although they are not considered the entire language arts program, the core works serve as key vehicles for introducing students to the intellectually stimulating world of literature. Teachers are careful not to destroy students' interest in literature by over-analysis and textbook treatment.

The extended program consists of works that students read on their own or in small groups to supplement the classwork carried on under the core program. Teachers recommend titles which are appropriate to students at this age level and their special interests, needs, and abilities. The relationship of the core and extended programs is built around themes, historical settings, types of characters, locations, curricular topics, or works of a particular author or illustrator.

The recreational-motivational program consists of titles readily available in the classroom, district, county, and public libraries. The literary works read by the students are based on the recommendation of teachers and/or librarians who are sensitive to the interests of students in this age group. The students read on their own for enjoyment and enlightenment, both in and out of the classroom.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Students develop effective speaking and critical listening skills through applied oral language activities. These include frequent experiences with varied literary works read aloud, storytelling, performing, and formal and informal presentations. Students share verbal and written reactions about their reading and writing in both teacher-directed and student-centered activities. They synthesize and integrate their reflections on what they hear and read into their own speaking and writing.

READING AS A PROCESS

All students, including those with special needs, experience good literature and engage in critical questioning and thinking about the works. Students learn to read by reading. Even in the beginning stages, they understand that reading means interacting with and deriving meaning from print. Students develop reading fluency; they develop decoding skills to the point where they are automatic and require little conscious attention, so that they can concentrate on constructing meaning of the text. Students learn to adjust their reading speed as appropriate for various kinds of printed matter and purposes. Instruction helps students move into, through, and beyond literary works. They are inspired to interact with the works, explore and ask important questions, find artistic value, and apply the meanings of the works to their own lives. All students learn and use a variety of reading comprehension strategies as they formulate and answer questions about stories written by their peers and by professional authors.

WRITING AS A PROCESS

All students experience writing as a recursive process which includes prewriting, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and postwriting activities. The core, extended, and recreational-motivational readings frequently serve as the foundation or points of departure for much of what students write. They are encouraged to develop fluency before attending to form and correctness. They write daily for a variety of purposes, audiences, and topics. Students write in a variety of modes, focusing on the narrative modes in the primary grades and progressing to the expository modes in the higher grades. Students develop their own voice as writers and see their finished products read, published, displayed, and recognized. The conventions of writing, including correct usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and handwriting are acquired primarily in the context of the stages of the writing process as well as through direct instruction when necessary.

INSTRUCTION

Students relate literature to their personal experiences and connect new knowledge to previously learned concepts through direct instruction, cooperative student interactions, and independent activities. Students share the responsibility for and control over their learning with their teacher(s) and their classmates. Independent activities support and prepare students for small group discussions and whole class interaction. Students are asked open-ended questions which connect them to and go beyond the text. They are encouraged to devise and ask their own questions. A balance of multimodal approaches enables all students to participate and succeed. Teachers model strategies for composing and comprehending. Students learn strategies for monitoring and adjusting their own learning when they encounter difficulties.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Literary works of high quality are available at all grade levels. Trade books, paperbacks, and carefully selected literary anthologies are used to achieve the goals of the program. They include literary selections of high quality and integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Publications available through the state textbook adoption program are carefully selected in light of the foregoing. Students use technology such as computers and audiovisual media, as a resource for (1) discovering new information, (2) storing information, (3) composing, (4) practicing and learning, and (5) sharing information, ideas, and their own oral, written, and visual expressions with others. The classroom arrangement provides for small-group work; whole-class discussion; displays of student work;

independent work in listening, viewing, reading, and writing centers; and a classroom library.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of students' strengths and progress in the language arts program is systematic and ongoing, including a broad range of both subjective and objective assessments. Evaluation reflects the purposes of the curriculum and includes (1) frequent self-assessment and peer critique of writing and speaking activities; (2) teachers' informal and formal evaluations of students' participation and achievement related to both individual, group, and class objectives; (3) evaluation by teachers of only final drafts of student writing, i.e., teachers should not try to edit early drafts of student writing. Anecdotal information and data on students' performance are collected, e.g., portfolios of student work, tests, homework, etc. Students' work is evaluated in terms of quality, quantity, type of work, and growth. Feedback is provided regularly to students and parents through test scores, grades, conferences, peer critiques, notes, and awards or other forms of recognition. All students experience frequent success, and the performance of various student populations is monitored. Modifications in the instructional program are made to promote the optimal development of each student.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Teachers, the principal, and other adults express and demonstrate enthusiasm for the language arts. They model effective speaking and listening skills throughout the school day, and they read and write along with and in view of the students. The school library contains an extensive collection of books and nonprint materials of high quality. Such material is available in languages other than English for LEP students and in modes appropriate to the needs of the special education students. Teachers and library personnel encourage and assist students to select and use a variety of resources. They provide instruction regarding the location and use of information from various reference materials. District and site administrators, teachers, and specialists support an integrated language arts programthrough planning, staff development, and communication with parents.

EXEMPLARS

- Literary works selected represent:
    - All genres or major literary forms, such as poetry, drama, myths, fables, short stories, novels, essays, diaries, biographies, speeches, and articles
    - Authors, both male and female, who exemplify the diverse racial perspectives, styles, cultures, points of view, and historical as well as contemporary attitudes
    - The full range of human moods and voices: comic, romantic, tragic, satiric, melodramatic, etc.
    - Language use which is fresh, inventive, and worthy of imitation
    - A depth of intellectual, social, and moral content which is suitable in terms of the students' emotional and intellectual development

- Cultural literacy is fostered. Students become familiar with characters, places, and events; discuss unique cultural values, perspectives, and experiences; learn idioms and often-quoted lines; and increase their store of knowledge of commonly shared literary and historical references.

- Instruction guides all students through a range of thinking processes which is not based on the assumption that students must acquire one type of thinking before being able to progress to another. All students develop their ability to predict, interpret, compare and contrast, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, solve problems, ask questions, and integrate meaning through comprehending (listening and reading) and composing (speaking and writing) activities.

- All students learn to speak confidently, to listen attentively and respectfully, and to trust that they will be heard.
- All students take part regularly in a variety of formal and informal oral language activities, such as:
    - Small-group and whole-class discussions, question and answer sessions, interviews, debates, speeches, reports, panel discussions, etc.
    - Oral interpretations, choral reading, oral reading, readers' theater, recitations, role playing, dialogue scripts, drama, chanting, and singing
    - Conversation, retelling of familiar literature, original storytelling, sharing of objects and experiences, and telling of stories about pictures
- In discussions with partners, small groups, and the entire class, students learn to:
    - Define and express their thoughts and values and reflect on them.
    - Respond to each others' insights and observations
    - Rephrase and clarify a point.
    - State opinions honestly, precisely, and tactfully.
    - Discover multiple viewpoints on a difficult issue
    - Negotiate and find common ground.
    - Recognize quality and appreciate artistic value.
- Through formal oral communication activities, such as speeches and other presentations, students in the middle grades learn to:
    - Prepare through interviews or reading.
    - Assess purpose and audience.
    - Organize their thoughts.
    - Introduce, present, and summarize.
    - Rehearse and practice timing.
    - Use logic and persuasion.
    - Employ effective delivery with appropriate eye contact, gestures, diction, and voice quality.
- Developmental language acquisition approaches are derived from the body of knowledge on how all humans acquire and expand language. They involve purposeful teacher-child interactions in which teachers:
    - Describe their own and students' activities as they occur.
    - Repeat what students say.
    - Restate ungrammatical or incorrect student utterances in the correct form, rather than directly correcting students' errors.
    - Expand what students say by adding details in the context of natural conversation.
    - Ask questions to which only the students know the answer or for which multiple responses are appropriate
    - Use contextual clues to reinforce meaning.
    - Ask referential or student-centered questions.
- All students hear good literature read aloud daily. Through this activity, they hear common story patterns and language rhythms, enlarge their vocabulary, stretch their comprehension abilities, develop a common background of content, and build a love of reading.

- All students engage in a daily program of sustained, silent reading.

- INTO literature -- Before reading or interacting with a literary work, teachers employ strategies to evoke the students' interest in the work and to connect them personally with it, such as:
    - Asking provocative questions about the work
    - Eliciting the students' related experiences and prior knowledge
    - Eliciting students' guesses or hypotheses about the content of the work
    - Providing an overview or synopsis of the work
    - Offering biographical information about the author and other interesting historical and factual information about the piece
    - Doing an oral reading of a lively scene, showing a film, or using outside resources, such as practicing authors and other speakers
    - Beginning with familiar, simpler works which share common themes with the more complex work

- THROUGH literature -- Students explore the work in depth through:
    - Reading and interacting with the work
    - Discussing the abstract ideas, concepts, and values encountered in the work
    - Generating their own interpretations and responses
    - Focusing on crucial quotations
    - Engaging in dramatic presentations of the work
    - Making predictions about what will occur in the piece
    - Recording their reactions in literature logs
    - Making journal entries of quotations or problems confronted by the characters
    - Designing artistic visualizations

- BEYOND literature -- Interaction with the literary work is followed by activities that help students pull their thoughts together to reflect on how the work relates to themselves and to society, such as:
    - Discussing and writing their reactions and insights
    - Reconsidering and reinterpreting their world views as a result of the work
    - Developing an illustration showing relationships among characters
    - Relating one piece of literature to another
    - Dramatizing the work
    - Reading parallel works among genres
    - Writing a new preface, a new ending, a change of scene, a script for readers' theater, interpretive questions, summaries, imagined interviews, or sequels

- New or difficult vocabulary is studied through the use of contextual clues within the literary work and through discussion before and after the reading assignment. Words take on new meaning and interest as students dramatize and illustrate them.

- Students experience all of the following stages or steps in the writing process:
    - Prewriting activities in order to select a topic, identify the intended audience, and determine the mode, tone, and style of the writing

- Drafting activities in which the students manipulate language to suit their meaning and purpose, organize details, and give evidence
- Responding activities in which students compare different versions of the same piece of writing, consult with individual students regarding that writing, and give oral or written responses to what has been written
- Revising activities in order to clarify thoughts and ideas, literally re-seeing and rethinking the writing
- Editing activities to improve style, diction, and adhere to writing standards and conventions by:

  - editing the works of peers and other individuals
  - using an editing checklist or scoring guide for the conventions of language
  - using references or handbooks on usage, grammar, and other conventions of writing
  - conferring with teachers and peers

- Postwriting activities which include evaluating the work individually, with peers, and with the teacher, and such activities as displaying student writing or publishing it in classroom anthologies, newspapers, etc.

- Students in the middle grades become familiar with and use the rhetorical features and the conventions used in holistic scoring guides for all modes of writing specifically tested by the California Assessment Program.

- Teachers create a positive climate for students with special needs by:

  - Drawing them into activities
  - Supporting students' native language or dialect while at the same time promoting the additive rather than the replacive acquisition of Standard American English (SAE), i.e., students learn SAE without losing their home language or dialect.
  - Helping students realize that their ideas are important and that they have something of significance to say when they talk or write
  - Bolstering self-confidence

- Students work often in heterogeneous ability groups to create group and individual products. These pairings or groupings:

  - Promote interdependence among students.
  - Frequently rotate roles, e.g., facilitator, monitor, recorder,etc.
  - Provide for significant participation by each member.
  - Encourage risk taking in an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and support for individuals and their ideas.
  - Reward individual and group efforts.

- The classroom is rich in materials which represent a variety of genres, levels of difficulty, interests, and topics. Reference materials are also available in the classroom.

- Assessment focuses on students' strengths in using language and does not take up excessive classroom time at the expense of instructional time.

- A variety of measures are used in conjunction with classroom assessments to determine the quality of the language arts program, such as:

  - CAP data
  - Frequency of use of the library/media center
  - Attitudes of students

  - Extent of parent support, participation, and satisfaction
  - Extent to which student work is displayed, published, and rewarded
  - Quantity and types of student writings
  - Quality and types of special needs services
  - Outcomes for special needs students
  - Background and training of teaching staff

- Teachers, library/media specialists, and students form book clubs for recreational, classroom, and professional reading.

- Teachers encourage parents to assist their children to succeed in the program through activities by the parents such as:

  - Supporting the successful completion of homework assignments
  - Responding to the writing of their children
  - Modeling the reading of a variety of materials
  - Modeling effective listening, speaking, and writing
  - Having their children read to them and write for them
  - Having their children help their younger siblings with school work
  - Encouraging their children to make use of public libraries
  - Monitoring their use of television and radio

- Library/media services and practices encourage students to explore and use the library regularly for assigned language arts activities and their own interests. Resources available in the library/media center are plentiful, organized, well-maintained, and of high quality; they include computers, books, films, videotapes, audiotapes, periodicals, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. In using technological resources, students engage in interactive activities that require critical thinking rather than short-answer, workbook-type exercises.

- Teachers of language arts meet regularly with each other and with other teachers, specialists, and administrators to review their program, to verify that it links with other curricular areas, to plan for students they share in common, and to plan improvement strategies.

RESOURCES

The following publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Becoming a Nation of Readers, 1985.
- Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools, 1987.
- English-Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, 1987.
- English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide, K-8, 1988.
- Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, K-12, 1988.
- Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program, K-12, 1986.
- Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process, 1987.
- Recommended Readings in Literature, K-8, 1986. (A 1988 annotated edition is also available.)

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is a powerful tool for helping students make sense of their rapidly changing world. The curriculum is designed to assist students in discovering and appreciating mathematical relationships and their implications for present application and future opportunity. Instruction should develop the students' abilities to enjoy and use mathematics. The major focus of the core mathematics curriculum is the development of essential mathematical understandings in all of the strands: number, measurement, geometry, patterns and functions, statistics and probability, logic, and algebra.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Curriculum	
The faculty has examined the instructional materials and assessment instruments (especially commercial tests) in use to identify discrepancies between their explicit and implicit instructional purposes, and the school's learning goals for students.	The school can say only that the topics listed in its curriculum match reasonably with the topics covered by the instructional materials and assessment instruments in use.
All strands are incorporated and interwoven in the lessons; no single strand receives dominant attention.	The program deals primarily with the rules of arithmetic, with isolated lessons on geometry or algebra or statistics.
Most lessons involve several ideas. Students are presented challenging complex situations to work on.	Each lesson is about one sharply delineated topic. Problems are chosen to fit the narrow objective of the day's lesson.
Problem solving is the context approach used consistently for acquiring mathematical ideas.	Problem solving is a set of techniques studied separately, or problem solving is something fitted in "as time permits."

The lessons include a variety of mathematical challenges for students, including not only mathematical games and puzzles but also interesting quantitative problems drawn from other areas.	Lessons have problems of a single type, with little motivation other than learning and practicing a new textbook skill.
All problems that students work on have either been generated by the students or have been presented with an interpretation that has meaning for them.	Many problems that students work on have been contrived; they would never appear anywhere but in school. Purely symbolic problems are especially common.
All students work on assignments they find interesting; no student is assigned to practice mechanical skills.	Students with low achievement in arithmetic are given extra computational practice instead of the work other students do.
Lessons are designed to reinforce previously taught concepts and skills by requiring their use in a variety of new situations with real world settings.	When concepts and skills appear more than once in the curriculum, they are taught and practiced in the same way they were originally.
Students frequently work on assignments in which they combine simple skills to solve practical problems, such as those involving ratio, proportion and percent.	Each problem in an assignment makes use of only one skill. Percentages, for example, may be calculated but are not used in producing other results.
Students perform calculations in a wide variety of meaningful settings, with particular attention to the degree of accuracy needed in the results.	Students often do purely symbolic arithmetic, with exact results expected unless explicitly stated otherwise.
Students consistently use numbers of all kinds, as a natural and necessary part of making quantitative judgments or predictions.	In most lessons students use only whole numbers; decimals appear only in decimal lessons or in optional application lessons.
Students have calculators at all times.	Students are allowed to use calculators in some lessons and not in others.
Instruction	
Students' major work is on questions/problems they haven't seen before. They are expected to learn from doing.	The teacher or the book shows the students how to do something, and they practice doing it.
Students make conjectures or reach conclusions through oral interaction with one another.	Students mostly work individually.

Students reach their own conclusions and give their evidence/reasoning (sometimes to the whole class). The teacher seldom acts as the authority, saying that a result or interpretation is correct.	The teacher tells the students what they should have gotten from the lesson. He/she says who is correct and why. The teacher wraps up for the class.
Lessons are expected to generate new or broader questions during a class. Students are expected to "worry with" questions overnight (or longer), to return to "incomplete" issues/questions.	There is a consistent interest in closure. The teacher brings completion each day.
Perseverance is promoted. In most assignments students have ample time to ponder, explore, misstep, consider, restart, press on.	For most assignments, the time available for "finishing" is limited.
Student homework adds to the student's classroom program by leading him or her to explore situations, gather data, or interact with members of his or her family.	Homework is more of the same exercises performed in class.
Assessment	
Assessment gives primary attention to students' larger understandings.	There are many discrete "learning objectives" which draw attention away from students' larger understandings and use of mathematics in situations with meaningful context.
Assessment relies heavily on students' verbalizations, both written and oral, during as well as after their work is done.	Assessment is based primarily on the answers students get on test problems.
Assessment is based primarily on students' work over time.	Each assessment is based on a test given at a specific time and scored independent of any other work.

CURRICULUM

The mathematics curriculum includes the major concepts and skills of each of seven strands: number; measurement; geometry; patterns and functions; statistics and probability; logic; and algebra. The program maintains a balanced approach to the development of students' conceptual understanding, procedural knowledge, and problem solving ability. Students are expected to be automatic with the single digit number facts and with multiplying or dividing by factors of ten. They demonstrate their "number sense" as they calculate with facility and accuracy; calculations are made mentally, with paper-and-pencil, or with a calculator, according to the nature of the problem and the use to be made of the result. Students do not practice computational skills in isolation; rather, they are consistently expected to produce numerical results, using realistic data, for a wide variety of practical applications that have meaning for them. Particular attention is paid to comparing quantities, especially through the use of ratios and percentages.

The middle grades program concentrates on students' abilities to discern mathematical relationships, reason logically, and use mathematical techniques effectively. The curriculum is designed to broaden their understanding of key mathematical concepts rather than focus on narrow textbook topics or vocabulary. All students have the opportunity to become accomplished in the basic skills and concepts of mathematics as well as to participate in higher level course work. No student is limited to the computational aspects of the number strand. A vigorous exploration and questioning program is in place rather than remedial instruction in low-level, mechanical skills, especially for those students with limited computational skills. These students in particular are coached on underlying mathematical relationships that will allow them to study substantive mathematics in high school. For students who, at the end of seventh grade, have successfully completed the study of K-8 mathematics as described in the Mathematics Framework, a full and complete first-year Algebra course is provided.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Mathematical concepts and skills are learned as a part of a dynamic process which is organized around students' active involvement in the learning process. Lessons feature predominantly hands-on experiences. Students work in individual, paired, and small-group cooperative modes in which they learn from and test ideas with one another. Uncertainty is accepted as a natural condition of inquiry and persistence is actively encouraged and acknowledged. Middle grade students often work on individual and group projects some of which are assigned by teachers and others which the students develop themselves. The projects vary in duration, ranging from one or two periods to a full semester. Students are often expected to do a portion of their project outside of regular classroom time.

Teachers model the asking of provocative questions and help students generate and refine their own questions. Teachers continually stress that students are responsible for thinking and that they must be persistent as they conjecture, hypothesize, and pursue possibilities.

Each student takes an active role in problem solving. Students are encouraged to formulate and model problems, distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, organize information, make conjectures and test their validity, analyze patterns and relationships, use inductive and deductive processes, identify or evaluate alternative mathematical approaches, find and test solutions, and interpret results. Students are challenged with both real world and abstract problems, including simple and complex situations that require their active thinking rather than merely following learned procedures. Students learn how data can be used selectively to support differing values, opinions, and points of view. More broadly, students come to appreciate both the power and the limitations of using quantitative data to analyze and interpret the real world.

Scientific notation is used regularly, with particular attention to the number of significant figures that should be employed. Students in the middle grades are expected to produce and report results with the precision that matches the type of data and the use to which they may be put. Calculators are continuously available for individual students' use inside and outside of class.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Teachers and students routinely use concrete materials as well as new instructional technologies, e.g., videotapes, compact discs, microcomputers, and software programs. There are sufficient materials and equipment for all students to participate optimally to master the core mathematics curriculum. Equipment, software, and materials, including realia and manipulatives, are updated regularly to reflect the latest developments in technology and mathematics education. Students use the equipment and materials with confidence and estimate with sufficient accuracy to recognize when a result they have gotten with a calculator or computer is plausible.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Teachers have informal exchanges as well as formal scheduled patterns of conferring with each other. They address the achievement of individual students and student populations. The principal, staff, and parents regularly discuss the mathematics program in its own right and as an integral part of the curriculum. They periodically consider modifications of materials, assessment approaches, and instructional methodologies. Through informal observations as well as through formal evaluations, teachers assess students' products and performance.

There is ongoing staff development for teachers and instructional leadership roles are fostered. Teachers have opportunities for professional growth and they serve as important resources for their colleagues. The administration supports teacher experimentation and accepts the developmental nature of instructional and programmatic improvements. The teachers often interact to coordinate departmental objectives and collaborate on ways to achieve those objectives for all student populations. There are also formal mechanisms for mathematics teachers to communicate and collaborate with other departments so that mathematics becomes a mutually reinforcing component of students' overall core curriculum.

EXEMPLARS

- Instruction centers on students' understanding of concepts and the relationships among them.

- Students demonstrate their ability to think mathematically by their competence in constructing and inventing mathematical solutions to problems. They learn to:

  - Formulate problems.
  - Analyze problems.
  - Select strategies for solution.
  - Verify and interpret solutions.

- Instructional objectives focus on students' ability to discern mathematical relationships, reason logically, and use mathematical techniques effectively.

- Teachers and counselors consistently emphasize, for males, females, and students with special needs, that each student has the capability for mathematical thinking and performing.

- A complete, first-year algebra course is offered to all students who qualify according to the Mathematics Framework.

- Regular monitoring of the students' work enables the teacher to modify lessons and assignments to ensure that students are productively engaged.

- **Instructional strategies ensure that underachieving students as well as normally achieving students are engaged in tasks that will help develop their capacity for mathematical thinking.**

- **Regular meetings are used by the mathematics teachers to develop and coordinate the objectives of the mathematics program and collaborate on the implementation and evaluation of those objectives.**

- Homework assignments are designed to provide meaningful and creative experiences that supplement and reinforce classroom activities.

RESOURCES

The following resource publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Handbook for Planning an Effective Mathematics Program, 1982.
- Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools, 1985.
- Mathematics Model Curriculum Guide, K--8, 1987.

SCIENCE

The core science curriculum includes earth, life, and physical science for all students. Science instruction accommodates the diversity of students' curiosity, interests, language proficiency, and abilities. Active learning is a central feature of classroom instruction, and teachers expect student creativity and commitment to learning. The science curriculum is designed to present concepts of increasing breadth and complexity at appropriate intervals throughout the grade levels. The science program encourages students to take a life-long interest in science and understand its effects on their daily lives.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Students are exposed to a balanced science curriculum that features life, earth, and physical science with emphasis on the relationships of science and technology to modern-day life as an adolescent.	Science instruction features the life and earth sciences, with little time spent on physical sciences (chemistry, physics) or the interconnections among the sciences.
In biological science, the emphasis is on human ecology; this curriculum helps students understand themselves, and how they, as organisms, fit into the larger, biological world.	Life sciences are taught as a taxonomic tour of the living world, without drawing on the relationships of humans with the global environment.
In physical science, the emphasis is on energy, sources, and transformations; this curriculum demonstrates the relationships among various energy systems, how they differ, and how they are similar.	Physical sciences are taught with an emphasis on abstract, symbolic representations of energy systems.
In earth science, the emphasis is on conserving and utilizing our natural resources wisely; this curriculum describes California's (and the world's) landforms and geological resources.	Earth sciences are taught as a litany of terms that describe landforms, without describing the origins or implications of such formations.

The middle grades science program offers many interdisciplinary connections with language arts, mathematics, social science, and the arts.	Students rarely have the opportunity to make connections between scientific knowledge and processes and other curriculum areas.
Students receive three semesters of science instruction. The quality of instruction must show how concepts from one discipline (e.g., geology) relate to another (e.g., meteorology).	The science curriculum is an assembly of bits of knowledge or skill development with little effort made to place the subparts of lessons into a larger context for learning.
The total science program is action-oriented with students working hard to understand science concepts deeply, with a sense of how these concepts are manifested in their lives.	Students experience science as a "rhetoric of facts and conclusions," rather than a search to understand natural phenomena.
Science instructional materials involve students in learning by doing; text materials engage students in the unraveling of natural events and reveal how such phenomena impact a modern, technological society.	Science texts are outdated, dry, and provide little opportunity to pique students' interest in science or scientific careers.
"Learning by doing" is the hallmark of middle school science. "Doing" science can take many forms, but the common denominator is active learning.	Instruction is focused on knowledge of scientific facts at the recall and comprehension level. Little time is spent on placing this information in the context of larger conceptional schemes.
All students receive a core science experience that builds on the knowledge and skills learned previously by participating in a variety of instructional activities.	Instruction begins from a starting point that does not take account of previous education or misconceptions about science.
Hands-on science experiments take students to the realm of science that is most interesting, but reading about science can be engaging if the stories are lively and relevant to students. Similarly, demonstrations, videos, simulations, and other activities are "doing" science when student interaction is frequent and meaningful.	Students spend most of their time in science class listening to lectures, watching teacher demonstrations, and performing laboratory exercises whose outcome is already known.
Instructional activities that excite the child and stimulate the adult are a regular part of middle grade science instruction.	Instruction is aimed at passive, low-level recall tasks that fail to take account of students' developing maturity.
Science instruction at the middle grades begins to appeal to more "adult" levels of sophistication. Science instruction begins to treat ethical issues, where the values and positions of others are respected and dealt with seriously.	Science instruction rarely provides students with the opportunities to see real-world applications of science and technology and their implications for society.

Science instruction employs a "project" mode, where students with diverse backgrounds and interests in science work collaboratively to solve mutually meaningful problems. Projects like science fairs encourage students to take more responsibility for learning. Projects also create an environment where each student can make a valuable contribution to shared learning.	Science instruction is not differential for learners of differing abilities, background, and learning styles; some students are challenged, while most are bored or frustrated.
Students' performance is evaluated consistent with the curricular and instructional codes established for the science classes. That is, a balance of items dealing with earth, life, and physical science (depending on the course); a consistent assessment of the science process skills and simulations and performance tests of roughly 40 percent laboratory skill development.	Paper and pencil assessment emphasizes life science content knowledge and excludes other types of information and ways of knowing.
Assessment gives primary attention to students' larger understandings.	There are many discrete "learning objectives" which draw attention away from students' larger understanding and use of science process skills in situations with meaningful context.
Assessment is based primarily on students' work over a period of time.	Each assessment is based on a test given at a specific time and scored independent of any other work.
Students' understanding of science concepts can be demonstrated through the development of science fair projects and being allowed to explain them to others.	Students' reports from reference materials without the opportunity to interact orally with the teacher or other students do not allow the students to demonstrate their depth of understanding.
Students' progress in science is monitored, and feedback is given to students and parents.	Science lessons are not as important as the "basics," and no assessment is necessary.

THE SCIENCE CURRICULUM

The science curriculum is balanced, sequential, and rigorous. It is balanced and devotes approximately equal time to the study of life, earth, and physical sciences, with emphasis on the relationships of science and technology to the life of young adolescents. Students progress through the sequential curriculum and encounter basic scientific concepts repeated at higher cognitive levels and in different contexts. Teachers continuously articulate and review the progression of knowledge and experiences over the different grade levels. The rigor, power, and limits of scientific inquiry are woven throughout the science curriculum in terms of topics such as (1) the nature of scientific investigation; (2) the values which underlie all scientific endeavors; (3) the uses of quantitative and qualitative data; (4) the differences between cause-and-effect and correlational data; and (5) the use of metaphors, analogies, and models to explain the world around us.

The middle grades science program also offers many interdisciplinary connections with language arts, mathematics, history/social science, and the arts. All students have equal access to science instruction and enroll in at least three semesters in grades six, seven, and eight. There is a concerted effort on the part of administrators and staff to encourage all students, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or academic performance levels, to become active science learners.

ACTIVITY-BASED INSTRUCTION

Science instruction is activity-based and builds directly upon students' previous knowledge, skills, interests, and background experiences. Students explore both the topics and techniques of scientific inquiry through a variety of instructional activities. Teachers are able to take into account and build upon individual student differences such as background experiences, interests, curiosity, abilities, and language proficiencies. Regular opportunities are provided for students to explore natural phenomena, to apply science knowledge to current situations, and to develop a positive attitude toward themselves as successful and interested learners of science. During direct teaching, the teacher varies the level and type of learning environment and delivery in order to provide each student with challenging presentations, follow-up activities, and materials that stretch his or her understanding of the physical and biological world.

RECOGNITION OF DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Science instruction recognizes the developmental characteristics of young adolescents. It includes discussions of ethical issues in which the values and positions of others are respected and dealt with seriously. Students are encouraged to think broadly and deeply about issues presented and discussed in a world-view context. Teachers encourage students to hypothesize, estimate, and make inferences as they work at doing science. Doing science is fun for students and is expected as a regular part of learning science.

Students' needs for interaction with their peers are recognized and provided for in active, student-centered learning activities which are central to the program. Students with diverse backgrounds, needs, and interests work collaboratively and cooperatively on projects to produce mutually meaningful outcomes. Teachers also design project activities to encourage students to read scientific writings, stories, and articles; create and develop graphs or charts; write laboratory and research reports; and explain scientific materials orally. Collaborative work enables each student, regardless of academic performance level, to make a valuable contribution through shared learning activities.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

The science program is fully supported by the school, district administrators, and the community. There is a wide range of instructional materials available for science learning. Science texts are up-to-date and supplemented by a variety of materials which include laboratory specimens, scientific equipment, and an array of simulations that employ technology. The Science Model Curriculum Guide and Science Framework Addendum are available in sufficient supply as resources for all teachers to implement fully their hands-on science program. New educational technology is also readily available and used in concert with other instructional materials.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Science teachers are regularly involved in staff development activities aimed at personal renewal and improved competence in science education. They collaborate frequently on curricular and instructional issues. The principal, staff, and parents regularly discuss the science program as an integral part of the curriculum and its role as it relates to the school's plan and other curricular areas. Science teachers new to the program receive direct support from a mentor teacher or science department chairperson to help them better implement the science curriculum.

EXEMPLARS

- In biological science, the curriculum emphasizes the panorama of life on earth, especially human biology; students learn to understand themselves and how they, as organisms, fit into the larger physical and biological world.
- In physical science, the curriculum emphasizes the understanding of physical and chemical changes; students learn the relationships among various energy systems (e.g., heat, light, electricity, magnetism and sound), how they differ, and how they are similar.
- In earth science, the curriculum emphasizes conservation in the utilization of natural resources. Students learn about California's and the world's landforms and geological resources.
- Science goals and curriculum are reinforced in other curricular areas and in extracurricular, exploratory, and co-curricular activities.
- Students' progress in science is routinely monitored, and feedback is regularly given to students and parents.
- Science instruction starts with concrete materials and advances to abstract reasoning. It develops conceptual understanding of the facts, principles, and theories of science as the foundation upon which the processes, techniques, and applications of science are based.
- Students observe and conduct experiments to learn scientific processes including:
  - Observing
  - Communicating
  - Comparing
  - Organizing
  - Relating
  - Inferring

- Students work on science projects that:
    - Start as teacher-directed and proceed to student-centered activities.
    - Are designed so that students of all ability levels and language proficiencies can and do participate.
    - Regularly mix students of differing interests and ability levels.
    - Emphasize cooperative learning.
    - Maximize student interest and motivation.

- Teachers lead discussions which challenge students to reason and think about their own ideas, perceptions, and assumptions about nature.

- Students regularly have opportunities to hypothesize and test their hunches in applying science knowledge.

- There are sufficient equipment, materials, and supplies to implement the science program for all students. The materials and equipment are appropriate to the learning tasks and objectives.

- Technology, such as computer software, video programming, and word processors, enhances the curriculum and improves the productivity of students and teachers.

- The school's adopted science textbooks are current and consistent with a "hands-on" approach to the teaching and learning of science.

- In addition to hands-on experiences, students learn science content from field observations, teacher demonstrations, group experiments, individual science fair projects, and a variety of print and electronic media as part of their regular instruction.

- Community resources enrich the science program. Students have the opportunity to interact with scientists, engineers, and technicians; and field trips to science and natural history museums, tide pools, and nature trails are an important part of the program.

RESOURCES

The following resource publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Science Education for the 1980s, 1982.
- Science Framework Addendum, 1984.
- Science Framework for California Public Schools, 1978.
- Science Model Curriculum Guide, K--8, 1988.
- Science Safety Handbook for California High Schools, 1987.

HISTORY-SOCIAL SCIENCE

Students' thinking becomes increasingly abstract and multidimensional during these middle grades years. They are able to engage in comparative analyses across multiple sets of data, reason on the basis of differences among the data, and develop and test hypotheses through deductive analysis. In the history-social science curriculum, students consider a wider sweep of human affairs than in the elementary grades. They follow the origins and development of major Western and non-Western civilizations in the sixth and seventh grades. Grade eight focuses on a review of the major ideas, issues, and events preceding the founding of our nation and concentrates on the period from the framing of the Constitution to World War I. Historical analyses must be both grounded in the lives of people and events and supported by a wide variety of realia, manipulatives, and other hands-on support materials. The emphasis on people takes advantage of middle grades students' openness and receptivity to the study of those who are different from themselves. Sufficient time is devoted to specific periods of history so that each is studied fully and in depth. The review unit at each level is designed to develop a deeper understanding of previous material. In this way the study of United States history is connected in grades five, eight, and eleven, and the study of world history is connected in grades six, seven, and ten. History is broadly interpreted to include not only the political, economic, and social arrangements of a given society but also its beliefs, religions, culture, arts, architecture, law, and literature. These areas are integrated with the other humanities and correlated across the other subject areas.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS:
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Specific periods of history and the people of that time who made a difference are examined fully and in depth through the study of literature of and about the people and period.	The curriculum is organized as a survey of great spans of time. Only a textbook is used, little opportunity is provided for the in-depth study of specific events, people, or issues.
A wide variety of concrete instructional support materials which enable students to make critical comparisons and to draw valid inferences are used to take into account the natural curiosity and energy of middle grade students.	The history-social science curriculum is academic and formal, with little time for student involvement in the study and comparison of people, events, issues, and data.

The history-social science curriculum is presented in a humanities core, such as that described in Caught in the Middle.	Each discipline in history-social science is presented as a separate and discrete subject. There is no connection with English-language arts, the sciences, or the visual and performing arts.
The experiences of men and women of different racial, religious, and ethnic groups are integrated at every grade level.	The experiences of diverse groups are mentioned in texts but are not fully developed.
Controversial issues are presented honestly and accurately from a variety of perspectives and within their historical and contemporary contexts.	In-depth exploration of controversial issues is avoided in texts and in classroom discussions.
Original documents, newspapers, court decisions, and speeches are used to give an accurate portrayal of the times, events, and issues.	Students use the text as their only source material for an interpretation of historical events.
The importance of religion in human history is included within the history-social science curriculum.	The role of religion in history is avoided or minimized in texts and classroom discussions.
All students use a wide range of thinking strategies in the history-social science class, such as detecting bias, recognizing illogical thinking and propaganda, and reaching conclusions based on solid evidence.	Instruction for most students focuses on low-level tasks such as memorizing dates, names, and places.
Instruction reflects a wide variety of content-appropriate teaching methods that engage students actively in the learning process, including reading literature, writing, debates, simulations, dramatizations, cooperative learning, and educational technology.	Instruction consists of reading the text, answering the questions at the end of the chapter, and studying for tests. Teaching methods and resources are not varied.
Students have opportunities to participate in school and volunteer in community service programs and activities. They are encouraged to use the community to gather information relevant to their studies.	School and community service activities are not organized to encourage student participation. The classroom is isolated from the community.

GOALS OF THE CURRICULUM

All middle grades students learn history-social science within the context of a full, balanced, and integrated curriculum which is enriched by literature and draws upon students' own experiences. This curriculum is aligned with the History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (1988) and Caught in the Middle (1987). It incorporates three goals that enable students to gain (1) knowledge and cultural understanding; (2) democratic principles and civic values; and (3) the academic and social skills necessary for their effective participation in a democratic society and the world. For each of these goals there are essential learnings which serve as curriculum strands.

Middle grades students study a more multidisciplinary view of human affairs than do elementary students, and they focus on links among the most significant issues, personalities, and events of yesterday and those of today. Although students develop increasingly abstract and multidimensional thinking, historical analysis continues to be grounded in the chronology of events and the lives of people.

INTEGRATION OF CURRICULUM

The teaching of history is integrated with the other humanities and social science disciplines. Instruction in English-language arts, the sciences, and the visual and performing arts is correlated with the history-social science programs. The study of history includes not only the political, economic, and social arrangements of a given society, but also its values, beliefs, religion, culture, art, music, dance, drama, architecture, law, literature, sciences, technology, and its relationship to other societies.

THE CURRICULUM IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

The course in grade six emphasizes the ancient world to A.D. 500, including the early societies of the Near East and Africa, the ancient Hebrew civilization, Greece, Rome, and the classical civilizations of India and China. World history and geography continue in grade seven and focus on social, cultural, and technological change from A.D. 500 through 1789. Studies focus on Rome, Islam, and the African states; great civilizations of the Americas; medieval cultures in China, Japan, and Europe; the Renaissance and Reformation; and the age of exploration to the Enlightenment. The grade eight course on United States history and geography includes the study of major ideas, issues, and events which formed the founding of America; it then focuses on the most critical historical events from the framing of the Constitution to World War I. For grade nine, students take two semesters of substantive study in history-social science electives. Courses may be one or two semesters long and should include significant topics such as California in the twentieth century, geography, humanities and comparative world religions, culture studies and anthropology, psychology and sociology, women's and ethnic studies, and law.

Each course in the middle grades program begins with a review of major issues or ideas from earlier periods in history approached from different maturity levels. It concludes with a unit specifically designed to link the past to the present, and it focuses on a major issue in modern times.

INSTRUCTION

Students learn history-social science concepts and skills through a dynamic process of active involvement as indiviudals and as members of small groups and whole classes. Instructional strategies are appropriate to the content of history-social science and to the developmental characteristics of middle grades students. Learning is challenging, exciting, and related to the lives of the students and to other subject areas.

Activities include research and writing projects; reading and analysis of primary source materials; the study of humanities, literature of and about historical periods studied, and storytelling; simulations, debates, oral presentations, and dramatizations; community service activities; individual and group projects; and cooperative learning activities. Technology in a variety of forms allows students to use and understand the primary methodological tools of the social sciences. They begin to understand the influence that information technologies have had on the study and understanding of geography, economics, politics, and other social sciences.

Questioning techniques encourage student participation, interaction, and use of higher-order thinking skills. Middle grades students engage in problem solving as well as personal and group decision making as they acquire, evaluate, and use information in a variety of ways. Students are increasingly responsible for and in control of their own learning. They employ a variety of cognitive strategies to monitor and adjust their progress and their activities. Students who are limited-English proficient have equal access to the core history-social science curriculum for all students. The teacher uses strategies in English and the student's primary language, as appropriate, and works collaboratively with support staff to ensure that, as a group, limited-English-proficient students make normal progress through the curriculum at a pace and success rate comparable to those of native English speakers.

CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL RESOURCES

Teachers bring the past to life through the use of lively texts, literary works, and primary-source documents and materials as well as audiovisual materials such as archival films and tapes, computers with telecommunications capacities, and mass media. Textbooks and accompanying materials are aligned with the goals of the state framework. The school has an established list of literary works which address all course descriptions and units of the history-social science program. For limited-English-proficient students, materials are available in their primary language and in English accompanied by rich contextual support. Instruction is supported in the classroom and the school library by a wide variety of equipment and materials. Students use audiovisual materials and technology as resources for discovering and storing information, analyzing data, conducting simulations, sharing information, and developing their own oral, written, and visual expressions. The school library or media center, local and national telecommunications services, the district instructional materials center, community library, historical and cultural centers, members of the community, and the local state and national governments are actively used by teachers and students to support and extend the classroom program.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of student progress in history-social science is systematic and ongoing and is aligned with the state framework and the CAP tests. Evaluative data, both quantitative and qualitative, are regularly collected and used to improve the history-social science program. Evaluation activities include a broad range of areas such as the ongoing assessment of critical thinking and research skills; writing activities; historical analysis; debate; cooperative problem solving; public speaking; and surveys of students, teachers, and parents. Students have regular opportunities for self-assessment and peer evaluation. Evaluative feedback is provided regularly to students and parents through test scores, grades, conferences, peer critiques, awards, and other forms of recognition. Progress of all students, including those with special needs, is monitored; modifications are made in the instructional program, but not in the curriculum, to promote the optimal development of all students.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Teachers work as teams and include librarians when appropriate to plan and teach the interdisciplinary humanities core. Teachers and site adminstrators express enthusiasm for the history-social science program and allocate time to plan collaboratively for program improvement, to coordinate and problem-solve during implementation, to learn new and effective teaching practices, to support each other in developing new skills and techniques, to coordinate their activities for students they have in common, and to accomplish intra- and interdepartmental articulation and integration.

Time and resources are allocated for staff development activities that are based on staff's assessed needs related to the framework. Administrative support for the library or media center ensures a wide variety of reference and research materials for the history-social science program. Supplementary services for special needs populations are provided to ensure that all students have access to and succeed in the core history-social science curriculum. The school is successful in its organized efforts to seek and maintain parent and community support for the program. Teachers and students take advantage of community resources, such as institutions of higher education; diverse cultural groups; senior citizens; primary language resources; historical societies; museums and galleries; music and performing artists; hands-on materials; artifacts; visual aids; speakers; sites of historical and geographic significance; and city, state, and national governments.

EXEMPLARS

- Students receive 250 minutes of history-social science instruction per week, as suggested in Caught in the Middle, within a humanities core of approximately two hours per day. Within this core block of time, students study English-language arts as well as history-social science.
- In studying the basic tenets of the major religions and their ethical traditions, students understand the impact and continuing influences of these ideas on people, places, and events during the periods under study and in their own lives.
- Democratic values are modeled and taught by teachers in the classroom, are prominent in the curriculum, and are incorporated in the daily life of the school.
- Problem solving is developed in individual and group projects, debates, essays, role-playing, writing, mock trials, classroom discussions, and in applying critical thinking to historical and related contemporary issues, events, and personalities.
- Students perform a variety of application activities in an interactive mode, such as producing video and radio scripts and performances, creating time lines and maps, conducting community-based research projects, volunteering for individual and group service projects, undertaking local history projects, compiling oral histories, conducting classroom meetings, participating in History Day activities, conducting mock trials, and participating in classroom and school elections.
- Regularly assigned homework engages students in short- and long-term problems that extend the issues of the classroom and

challenge the student to thinking at a higher level. Homework that requires writing is more frequent than other kinds of assignments.

- Teachers encourage parents to help their children to succeed in the programs through a variety of activities, including:
    - Reading and discussion of current events in newspapers, magazines, and the media
    - Reading and sharing books of literary merit, including but not limited to, historical fiction and nonfiction
    - Visiting historical places or sites in the community or region
    - Modeling good citizenship and individual responsibility for ethical behavior by voting, discussing public issues and candidates for office, and volunteering for community service activities

- Parents and other members of the community, including senior citizens, are invited regularly to share information on their culture and specific areas of expertise, such as careers, skills, and oral histories.

- Teachers utilize cultural events taking place in the community to emphasize the variety of religions, languages, and ethnic and cultural groups in California and the United States.

- Teachers and other staff use information on program strengths and weaknesses from the History-Social Science Program Diagnostic Displays in the CAP reports and the School Performance Reports to analyze and improve their program in a systematic way.

- The school site council, parent committee, or other community organizations regularly review the operation and effectiveness of the program.

RESOURCES

The following publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Caught in the Middle, 1987.

- History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 1988.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The visual and performing arts curricula enable all middle grades students to acquire knowledge, develop skills, expand their creative potential, and begin a lifelong involvement in an appreciation for the arts. Middle grades students' intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, and ethical characteristics are considered in the development of all arts curricula. Students become acquainted with and value the arts through experience, knowledge, and expression.

The arts curricula include dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts. They are planned and address the broad range of developmental levels of all middle grade students. These curricula reflect the unique characteristics of each of the arts, and they integrate and interrelate the arts with each other and with the core curriculum as appropriate. Students are taught the content and techniques that make each of the arts unique and learn to see the characteristics that the arts hold in common. Aesthetic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural heritage, and aesthetic valuing are fundamental components upon which all instruction in the arts is based.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS:
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
The written visual and performing arts curricula are systematic and articulated through the grade levels. They include aesthetic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural heritage, and aesthetic valuing.	The visual and performing arts curricula emphasize production/performance with little or no attention given to aesthetic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural heritage, and aesthetic valuing.
Adequate periods of time are provided in the instructional day for the visual and performing arts curricula to provide all students with an understanding of the arts in their lives and in the world, past and present.	The arts are not an essential part of the curriculum for all students. What is offered to the students who do participate has little relation to the environment, world cultures, history, or the ongoing need for human expression.
All students are involved in opportunities to express themselves creatively through the arts, both nonverbally and verbally.	Arts experiences are scheduled only for those who demonstrate a talent for the subject.

All students explore many art forms as well as begin to study chosen form in depth.	Participating students are limited to few, if any, opportunities to explore the arts, much less begin to study one in-depth for eventual proficiency.
Dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts are taught as discrete disciplines and are integrated for enrichment into other content areas.	Dance, drama/theatre, music, and the visual arts are taught only as separate disciplines with no connection to other arts disciplines or other curricular areas.
Students are engaged in visual and performing arts activities within the community, including attending a variety of performances, visiting museums, and experiencing the arts through artists or touring groups brought to the school. These activities are part of the planned arts program.	There is little evidence that students participate in activities outside the classroom or that artists or the community work in partnership with the schools to enrich the arts program.
The school library and other district and local resources provide students and teachers up-to-date arts reference materials such as videotapes, instructional films, slides, art reproductions, cassettes, records, scripts, reference books, software, and published music to enhance, expand, and strengthen the arts program.	The school has limited arts reference materials available for students and teachers, and appropriate resources are not identified or made available.
The district and school have a policy in place to provide support services, staff development, and time for planning the arts program.	Time for planning and appropriate staff development is not provided to support the arts program.
There are storage facilities, adequate materials, and teaching space at each site for each of the arts.	The school does not have adequate storage facilities for arts equipment or materials or appropriate space for arts instruction.
There are a variety of measures used to assess student and program success including data collected from attitudinal surveys, teacher observations of performances/products, critiques, and teacher-developed tests.	Assessment is infrequent and not considered as part of the learning and improvement process for the students.
There are sufficient and reliable financial resources at the school to implement the dance, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts curricula.	The basic visual and performing arts program relies on the uncertainties of donations, student fees, fund-raising events, and grants for a significant part of its support.

CURRICULUM

The district's visual and performing arts curriculum for the middle grades is aligned with the Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. It is part of the core curriculum for all students. Students receive well-articulated and sequenced programs in the arts that build on the knowledge and skills acquired at the elementary level and prepare them for the high school program. The middle grades offer students a time for individual growth, self-discovery, exploration, and challenge. The interests, abilities, and talents of middle grade students are emphasized and expanded. Students study, experience, and create artistic works. These activities are supported by instruction which teaches them to perceive, understand, and value artistic works, styles, and artists as well as to value the arts in their own lives. Students are able to observe, analyze, and critique the arts and see the ways that people from various cultures express themselves in the arts, both past and present. They prepare research reports dealing with the arts in terms of cultural characteristics, customs, legends, and/or the meanings associated with various styles and works.

All students take a course in one or more of the arts in the middle grades. Students are also provided the opportunity to select at least one of the four major arts disciplines for in-depth study: dance, drama/theatre, music, or visual arts. These students are expected to achieve not only the outcomes expected of all students but also an increased ability to use the expressive and technical qualities of their chosen discipline, learn about the history of the arts discipline, and to engage in well-informed critiques of their own work as well as that of others.

INSTRUCTION

The artistic growth of middle grade students is enhanced through diverse routes to learning. The unique aspects of each arts discipline as well as the commonalities across disciplines are reflected in instruction. Other subject areas such as history-social science are integrated into and enriched by the visual and performing arts curriculum, e.g., by studying the historical context of a work of art, artistic period, architecture, or the artistic customs and preferences of different peoples.

Middle school teachers use instruction in the arts to make contributions to the intellectual, creative, and social development of middle grade students. They cultivate students' critical listening and perceptual skills through a variety of strategies such as cooperative learning, peer critique, modeling, inquiry and discovery, and open-ended discussion. Arts from a variety of styles and periods are analyzed, compared, and contrasted using appropriate vocabulary. Teachers create a comfortable environment for the students through modeling and questioning techniques and encourage risk taking, reasoning, and creativity. Instruction also draws upon the artistic resources of the staff, community arts providers, and visiting artists for enrichment.

The arts program promotes a positive school climate which encourages all students to share their creative talents with their peers, school, and community. Students with promising talent or demonstrated interest are additionally coached to pursue the arts by participating in assemblies, studio or stage experiences, individual or group performances, and visual arts exhibits.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

The district supports the arts programs through a board-adopted statement of philosophy and sequential middle grade visual and performing arts core curricula. This program is articulated with the elementary and high school programs. There is a comprehensive plan for the use of community resources which includes the use of artists in residence, arts programs, performances, and visits to galleries, museums, and historic sites.

The district provides adequate support for the visual and performing arts program. There is also released time for staff development, program planning, school visitations, and collegial coaching. There is evidence that higher education resources provide middle grade students access to enriching experiences such as guest artists, performances, and a wide variety of materials and equipment.

The arts program utilizes local artists, community expertise, and additional arts resources to enhance the content and quality of programming, e.g., private nonprofit arts organizations, parent support groups, educational foundations, and individual corporations. Community support is also demonstrated by parent volunteers in the arts program and opportunities for students to attend and participate in local arts events.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

The visual and performing arts program is provided with the necessary materials, tools, equipment, resources, space, and appropriate and safe physical facilities. Teachers and students have access to up-to-date textbooks, reference materials, instructional films, videotapes, scripts and plays, musical instruments, published music, scores, dance arrangements and compositions, and art reproductions and slides. The students have access to a wide variety of media to study and to express their personal artistic preferences and choices. The advice of arts specialists is employed in the selection of appropriate resources, and community arts providers are utilized to coach and enhance the program.

EVALUATION

The evaluation component of the visual and performing arts programs includes aesthetic perception, creative expression, historical and cultural heritage, and aesthetic valuing.

Monitoring of the middle grades students' strengths and progress is systematic, frequent, and ongoing. Varied assessment methods are used in order to determine the quality of the program. These assessments include (1) teacher and peer observation; (2) student demonstrations and discussion; (3) oral and written test; (4) teacher and student critiques; and (5) multidisciplinary presentations, performances, and displays.

Data collection instruments include, for example, tests, audio and video recordings, checklists, attitudinal scales, and community surveys. The data collected documents varied aspects of the instructional program, including the extent of positive support and participation; training of teaching staff; time allocated for staff development, peer coaching/sharing/collaboration; and the type and quality of teacher and student questions and responses.

The results regarding the successes and weaknesses of the visual and performing arts program are provided to students, teachers, administrators, and the community.

EXEMPLARS

- The curriculum is based on the Visual and Performing Arts Framework.
  - Instruction in **aesthetic perception** emphasizes the individuals' ability to respond to the aesthetic elements of a work or event and appreciate it in greater depth. By the end of the middle grades, students learn to identify accurately, expressively, and confidently a variety of techniques, styles, artistic trends and movements, conventions, and characteristics of particular art forms and artists.
  - Instruction in **creative expression** emphasizes creating, performing, and interpreting. Students expand their capability for imaginative thinking which is reflected in their personal artistic expression through formal and informal presentations of vocal and instrumental music, theatre, and dance, and their production of visual artworks. Unique individual responses are encouraged and acknowledged by the teacher.
  - Instruction emphasizes the **historical/cultural context** of creative artists, their work, their stylistic development, and their effects on society in the past and present.
  - Instruction in **aesthetic valuing** emphasizes awareness and response to beauty in its many forms. Students study the sensory, intellectual, emotional and philosophical bases for understanding the arts in order to develop criteria for arriving at personal judgments about their form, content, technique, and purpose.

- Dance

  Through a variety of sequential learning experiences in dance, the middle grades curriculum emphasizes techniques as a mode of self-expression and communication. The program is designed for students to:

  - Develop body awareness, movement, efficiency, and control by responding kinesthetically and creatively to a variety of stimuli.
  - Express perceptions, feelings, and original movement in images, improvisations, and compositions through dance.
  - Observe, interpret, critique, and value aesthetic expression in dance.
  - Develop knowledge of and appreciation for the history and diversity of cultural traditions, ideas, and values in dance heritage.
  - Identify current dance forms and styles and the place of dance in past and contemporary culture, understand and appreciate the discipline and training necessary in skilled dancing, and enjoy dance as an art form.

- Drama/Theatre

  Through a variety of sequential learning experiences, the middle grades emphasize **drama/theatre** as an art form and academic discipline. The program is designed for students to:

  - Experience and respond to dramatic elements, action, and characterization.
  - Develop skills in storytelling, playmaking, acting, playwriting, and play production.
  - Refine aesthetic criteria for observing, discussing, and judging theatre.
  - Identify contemporary theatre forms and styles as well as the traditional forms from throughout the world.
  - Become familiar with great examples of dramatic literature from the past to the present.

- Music

  Through a variety of planned learning experiences in music, the middle grades emphasize student abilities to perform, create, and understand music. The program is designed for students to:

  - Demonstrate skills through vocal and instrumental performances.
  - Read and begin to write music as well as listen to, interpret, and critique vocal and instrumental music.
  - Increase knowledge of the historical traditions, periods, and performance styles of music, and explore qualities of sounds which are expressive of different cultures.
  - Understand the elements of music as stated in the *Visual and Performing Arts Framework: K-12* and learn and apply criteria for appreciating certain selections, performers, and composers.

- Visual Arts

  Through a variety of articulated learning experiences in various visual arts media, the middle grades emphasize visual arts as the study of art production, aesthetics, art criticism, and art history. The program is designed for students to:

  - Express ideas, thoughts, and feelings using the elements and principles of design in a variety of two- and three-dimensional visual arts media, both in individual and group projects.
  - Develop visual and tactile perception and reflect this in their artwork.
  - Develop a written and spoken vocabulary for aesthetic valuing and apply it in critiques of their own work and the work of others.
  - Understand and value the nature, quality, and contributions of the visual arts within their historical and cultural contexts, including works from American ethnic groups and the major cultures of the world.
  - Discover the role of the visual arts in shaping their personal and shared environment.

- All students have access to diversified arts experiences that foster their ability to create, respond to, analyze, and synthesize artistic form, thereby encouraging intuitive, emotional and verbal responses.

- The visual and performing arts support and enrich the curricula of history-social science, English-language arts, science, and other subjects as appropriate.

- Cultural literacy is fostered as students study the arts which:

  - Reflect ideals, traditions, and values of cultures from throughout the world.
  - Contribute to ceremonies and celebrations.
  - Reflect contributions of various ethnic groups.
  - Express personal values and the ideals of an individual.
  - Record the hopes, fears, aspirations, and anxieties of a society as they reflect the inner life of a people and are transmitted across generations.
  - Study, understand, and appreciate cultural similarities and differences expressed through the arts.

- Teachers of the visual and performing arts model positive attitudes and behaviors which encourage risk taking, experimentation cooperation, empathy, and respect for the work of others.

- Students perform and/or exhibit their works in class, the school, and in the community.

- Students with the highest interest in arts are encouraged to pursue the visual and performing arts beyond the classroom.

These students:

  - Participate in arts experiences that include a broad range of activities, e.g., studio classes in dance techniques and choreography, instrumental music programs and studio classes, community theatre productions, and visual arts studio production classes.
  - Work with artists-in-residence and other professional role models.
  - Utilize community resources that extend artistic learning beyond the classroom.

- The arts program emphasizes the use of analysis and comparison to encourage students to respect other points of view. Works of art are compared and contrasted to identify the qualities that make the works similar or different; this process promotes precision, accuracy, flexibility, and experimentation.

- The district plan includes recognition and support for outstanding teacher and student performances and/or works.

- Students have ongoing opportunities for self-evaluation of their arts performances, works, and compositions. All students regularly participate in large group, small group, and individual critiques.

- Teachers, administrators, and parents work together to develop a written evaluation plan of the visual and performing arts program. This plan is used to collect information regularly that will enable the school to improve the arts program for all students.

RESOURCES

The following publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916 445-1260):

- Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools, 1987.
- Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve, "Visual and Performing Arts," 1985.
- Quality Criteria for Elementary Schools: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review, 1990.
- Quality Criteria for High Schools: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review, 1990.
- Quality Criteria for Middle Grades: Planning, Implementing, Self-Study, and Program Quality Review, 1990.
- Technology in the Curriculum, Visual and Performing Arts, (resource guide), 1987.
- Visual and Performing Arts Model Curriculum Guide, Kindergarten Through Grade Eight, (in progress).
- Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 1989.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The health and well-being of students is of utmost concern to educators. Physical education, therefore, is vital in that it offers a direct link to the essential skills that enhance all aspects of life: physical, mental, emotional, and social. A well-developed physical education program focuses on the goals of (1) physical activity; (2) physical fitness and wellness; (3) movement skills and knowledge; (4) social development and interaction; (5) self-image and self-realization; and (6) individual excellence. The program should be developed within the context of a comprehensive approach to health curricula.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The physical education curriculum develops each student's knowledge, skills, and values which support physical wellness, efficient and expressive movement, self-direction, self-reliance, and prosocial competence. The physical education curriculum is developmental, acknowledges individual patterns of physiological and psychological growth, and delineates grade-level expectations. The program is well-planned and provides a link between wellness, nutrition, lifestyle, and fitness. Daily activities are planned and aligned with the goals and objectives of the physical education curriculum. The program is flexible and encourages students to explore new skill areas at their own pace. Units which review and reinforce previously acquired skills while introducing new skills are provided to acknowledge the vast physical changes students are experiencing. The curriculum provides safe and orderly planned-movement activities and exercises including organized play, rhythms, dance, basic movement skills, physical fitness and wellness, games, gymnastics, aquatics, and self-defense.

INSTRUCTION

The physical education instruction reinforces basic locomotor, nonlocomotor, stability, and fundamental equipment manipulation skills that enable students to expand and to apply information about the relationships of time, space, force, and flow in human movement. Students practice basic movements and complex patterns, and they are encouraged to practice and apply their skills in individual and group or team activities. Team and group activities emphasize goal setting, following rules, teamwork, competition, and cooperation to achieve common goals. The instructions continue to provide a major emphasis on creativity and imaginative play. Students gain an understanding of personal fitness to help them appropriately cope with concerns about body image and personal appearance which are particularly important at this self-conscious stage. Students practice good hygiene and shower after strenuous activity. Students are able to relate physical education to other disciplines such as science, mathematics, health, visual and performing arts, and English-language arts. Intramural programs that promote lifetime recreational interests are provided for all students in the school, regardless of ability or skill levels.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Physical education teachers establish a positive atmosphere and motivate students through their own enthusiasm. Teachers plan and employ a variety of instructional methods and teaching styles, including modeling, guided practice, discovery, and problem solving. These methods and styles accommodate the abilities, interests, and goals of all students. Lessons are characterized by direct instruction, student involvement, structured individual/partner/group activities, and pre-post evaluation. Lesson plans, teaching modes and styles, activities, and equipment are adapted to promote the optimal development of all students, including those with special needs. Student progress is monitored through a wide variety of performance and cognitive assessments. Students can verbalize the course goals and objectives and demonstrate an understanding of achievement expectations for grading purposes. Student growth is measured both in terms of grade-level norms as well as previous performance levels of individual students.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Participating students develop self-discipline and self-control, positive self-image, prosocial attitudes and skills, and individual excellence. They perform tasks which increasingly require self-appraisal and self-direction. Students learn in a non-threatening environment in which success is not dependent on athletic ability. The curriculum provides many opportunities for students to interact with peers through teamwork and cooperation toward the achievement of common goals. As competitive activities are introduced, students are specifically taught how to appropriately compete. They acquire an understanding of the concept of fair play and engage in its practice. Students expand their abilities to accept, appreciate and support others. Students who have exceptional needs, including those with health problems or physical handicaps, receive assistance and are included in activities structured to maximize their participation and success.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Teachers participate in staff development opportunities which address the current trends in physical education as well as strategies for ensuring all students access to and progress through the curriculum. Teachers meet regularly to assess the quality of the curriculum, the effectiveness of the program in terms of student growth and satisfaction, and to plan program improvements. Physical education is part of an integrated staff development program. Class size is comparable to other subject areas, encouraging teacher attention to individual student needs. Facilities and equipment are sufficient to ensure optimal learning and student participation. Indoor and outdoor facilities and equipment are adequately maintained and provide for a wide variety of activities. Community facilities are utilized to supplement and enhance that which is provided at the school. Extracurricular and intramural activities are provided to extend opportunities for all students to participate in ways which match their interests, goals, and abilities.

EXEMPLARS

- "Physical activity" refers to forceful, restful, and explosive-to-quiet movements; a knowledge of the principles of movement as well as the history, rules, and strategies of various activities.

- "Physical fitness" refers to aerobics, progressive resistance activities, endurance, stretching, and the promotion of an appropriate relative percentage of lean to fat body mass.

- "Wellness" refers to the relationship between physical fitness and exercise, nutrition, body composition, stress, sleep, prevention and care of injuries, healthy life-styles, and hygiene.

- "Movement skills and knowledge" refers to the development of fine and gross motor skills, the aesthetic and expressive aspects of movement, posture, transfer of learning, and effectiveness and efficiency in physical performance.

- "Social development and interaction" refers to a respect for self and others, a sense of fair play, an appreciation of individual differences, prosocial attitudes and behavior, fair competition, and control of aggression and conflict.

- "Self-image and self-realization" refers to body knowledge, identity, coping skills for stress, self-control, ethics, personal responsibility for well-being, creativity, aesthetics, and personal potential.

- Students experience daily physical education as a regular part of a balanced curriculum. Instructional time is well planned and meets minimum time requirements exclusive of recesses.

- All instruction and activities are coeducational and reflect equity in all aspects of the program.

- Students develop and maintain a high level of fitness and wellness by:

  - Evaluating personal responses to various levels of activity by monitoring personal heart rate at rest, during vigorous activity, and at the end of a designated recovery period
  - Calculating personal calorie consumption and expenditure
  - Identifying possible injuries which result from improper warm-up in various activities and describing the benefits of proper conditioning, warm-up, and cool-down activities
  - Identifying personal areas of stress and practicing routinely a personal stress-reduction plan
  - Understanding the relationship of the cardiorespiratory system and the major muscle groups in aerobic exercises
  - Developing and maintaining personal records of scores on health-related fitness tests and setting increasingly challenging personal goals for improvement

- Students develop effective motor skills, understand the fundamentals of movement, and appreciate the aesthetics of creative movement by:

  - Contrasting heavy and light qualities in movements such as swaying, bending, twisting, and turning
  - Creating and performing a routine that illustrates variations in time, force, space, and flow
  - Participating in individual and dual activities such as badminton, wrestling, tennis, swimming, racquetball, handball, golf, and archery
  - Demonstrating the ability to respond to external stimuli in game situations with appropriate movements, e.g., catching batted ground and fly balls, passing a soccer ball diagonally ahead to a teammate, and returning a shuttlecock in badminton
  - Participating on a team in designated positions and with specific responsibilities such as playing volleyball with designated setters and hitters
  - Demonstrating a broadening understanding of the wide variety of physical activity opportunities by completing both written and oral projects on sports or activities not commonly taught in physical education, such as horseback riding, boating, mountaineering, skiing, and curling

  - Analyzing the performance of others, such as identifying strengths and weaknesses
  - Inventing a physical activity or game appropriate for an imaginary culture on another planet
  - Developing an aesthetic appreciation of movement by comparing the motions of athletes in sports with those of performers in dance

- Physical education instruction is related to other curricular areas, including:

  - Health
  - Science
  - Mathematics
  - English as a Second Language
  - Nutrition
  - Safety/First Aid
  - Prevention and Treatment of Injuries

- Students develop and maintain a positive self-image and exhibit appropriate prosocial behaviors by:

  - Participating in activities that require group cooperation for success, such as baseball
  - Working with, and learning to accept the decision of, student and adult referees and umpires
  - Learning to modify rules and strategies to adapt a given activity to the skills of diverse participants
  - Giving and accepting peer assistance in working toward skill improvement
  - Completing a report on an individual with a disability who has achieved personal excellence in a sport or dance activity, and discussing the personal qualities that contributed to the individual's achievements.

- Students strive to achieve their highest personal level of physical performance and participation by:

  - Monitoring personal scores in golf, archery, and other individual activities and developing strategies for personal improvement that minimize feelings of inadequacy
  - Recording their individual scores on physical fitness tests and developing plans for individual improvement
  - Participating in extracurricular physical activity programs in addition to participating fully in the school physical education program, e.g., intramural sports, dance ensembles, aerobics classes, and bicycling or hiking clubs

- Teachers introduce, model, and provide guided practice for new concepts and activities before students proceed on their own.

- Students experience extensive time-on-task to develop skills; equipment is provided in amounts that allow each student to participate actively. When learning stations are utilized, adequate equipment for each student is provided at each station.

- Organizational strategies include large, small, and flexible groupings; cooperative learning; peer-tutoring; and individual practice, study, and performance.

- Students with limited proficiency in English are provided primary language and sheltered English instruction to the extent necessary for normal progress through the core physical education curriculum.

- All students are assessed at the beginning of the school year and regularly throughout the year. Teachers use the results of assessments to determine an appropriate program of instruction and practice.

- Standards for student performance and grading procedures are written and communicated to all students and parents.

- Teachers employ community resources such as:
  - Recreation departments
  - Youth recreational and fitness programs
  - Community facilities
  - State and national parks
  - Educational technology
  - Doctors and hospitals
  - Community leaders
  - Business and industry

- The school and district administrations support the physical education program by ensuring that sufficient trained staff, facilities, equipment, and materials are available to implement a high-quality program and by holding staff accountable for optimal student development.

RESOURCES

The following resource publication is available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Handbook for Physical Education: Framework for Developing a Curriculum for California Public Schools, 1986.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The English-as-a-second language (ESL) program is planned with clearly stated goals and objectives for having students acquire native-like communicative competence in English. The program enhances students' self-confidence and promotes language proficiency for personal, social, and educational purposes. The curriculum moves students from early to advanced levels of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Through both the curriculum and instruction, students learn to accommodate the sociocultural similarities and differences between the native language setting of the home and the second language environment of the school.

ESL instruction develops students' abilities to use English as a means of gaining knowledge, acquiring skills, and communicating with others. It enhances higher order thinking across the ESL and core curricula; promotes academic skills in the content areas; and strengthens students' abilities to listen actively, speak fluently, read efficiently, and write effectively. Students engage in both teacher-directed and student-centered activities which are or simulate authentic uses of English by native speakers. Teachers and students approach learning as developmental and do not make unreasonable demands for grammatical accuracy over communicative function and the natural stages of second-language acquisition.

Qualified teaching and support staff are sensitive to students' needs. Materials accommodate students' interests, backgrounds, and levels of language proficiency. Identification and assessment practices ensure recognition of students' strengths and result in proper placement. Assessment for achievement is holistic and competency-based and is aligned closely with the content and format of the ESL curriculum and instruction. There is active collaboration and staff development among professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer staff members in the program.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average, limited-English-proficient, underachieving, and gifted and talented students; students receiving special education instruction and services; and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Curriculum	
There is a written description of what constitutes successive levels of language competency, and students experience a smooth transition between levels and schools.	There is little or no articulation between schools and levels for ESL students.
Printed materials with authentic language and situations correspond to students' ages and English proficiency levels.	All students use the same texts regardless of ESL proficiency level or age; there are no materials for some students, especially those who are preliterate. Printed materials often contain overly simplified, contrived, or stilted text.

The ESL program is meaning-centered and literature-based; it is supplemented when necessary with direct instruction in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation related in meaningful ways to and in the context of the ESL and academic core curriculum.	Material is often disjointed and skill- or grammar-based without meaningful ties to literature or to the other features of the English-language arts curriculum.
Non-English speakers who are literate in their first language have access to the core curriculum through both materials and instruction in that language.	There are few or no materials in the student's native language related to the core curriculum.
The ESL curriculum, materials, instructional practices, and expectations reflect high standards and are consistent across classrooms.	Instruction by teachers of the same levels differs greatly in quality, content, and outcomes.
Technology (e.g., videos, films, recordings, tapes, and computers) provides a variety of language experiences for ESL students.	There is little or no technology available to ESL students.
Instruction	
ESL instruction is developmental in nature and allows students to acquire English to their fullest potential at a pace appropriate to their ages and developmental levels.	ESL instruction is perceived as remedial, intended to correct the language problems or deficits of the ESL students.
Various approaches appropriate to students' language levels, academic proficiency, and communicative needs are used. Approaches include frequent student-centered, activity-based instruction.	Whole-class direct instruction is the dominant mode offered in the ESL program.
Direct instruction in handwriting, sound-letter correspondence, and pronunciation is based on assessed need and is provided in the context of the communicative, meaning-based ESL curriculum.	Intensive drill and practice in handwriting, decoding, mechanics, and minimal pair sounds predominate.
Cooperative, heterogeneous experiences provide rich opportunities for student-student interactions--both in ESL across language groups and proficiency levels and within content classes between ESL and native English speakers.	Teachers assign students to roles in groups which keep ESL students from participating fully in class or from interacting with native English speakers.

Students' home languages and cultural experiences are incorporated into the curriculum and instruction.	No effort is made to use the rich variety of languages and cultures of the ESL students in class. Students are sometimes forced to deny, relinquish, or ignore their heritage.
Methods and materials of instruction instill self-confidence and self-esteem.	Students are often criticized and corrected in public for their English usage.
In large groups, small groups, and dyads, students discuss ideas and values related to the core readings, with instruction focused on helping students develop new insights into their own lives and those of others.	Skill sheets are central to the curriculum. Students passively complete skill sheets and read controlled-vocabulary stories in order to develop correct speech, complete prescribed writing assignments, and comprehend conventional interpretations of texts. Any formal teaching of literature is limited to the study of plot, character development, vocabulary, and grammatical structures.
A range of thinking skills is taught in the context of worthwhile literature. A wide range of thinking develops as students read, write about, and discuss the meanings they discover through this literature.	Thinking is perceived as distinct, separate, and hierarchically arranged levels. Thinking instruction is separated from the language development and content instruction.
Students in all subjects learn to use the writing process flexibly, with attention to the different strategies necessary for the different kinds of writing people actually do. Writing instruction begins with encouraging fluency and content before correctness of form, handwriting, and spelling. Students focus on making sense of what they read, write, and discuss; and teachers assess progress in terms of function and fluency rather than correctness.	Only low-level writing tasks are taught, often without purpose and without incorporating students' personal ideas and experiences. Students are taught formulas for written products (e.g., the five paragraph essay and the paragraph with a fixed topic sentence). The purpose is to promote grammatical and structural correctness. Handwriting and spelling are taught as separate subjects apart from literature-based writing.
Oral language proficiency is encouraged through a variety of listening and speaking activities for individuals and groups in settings where meaning is sought and negotiated from literature and real-life experiences.	Only the best students are encouraged to speak, and the activities are not connected to reading and writing. Opportunities for self-expression in individual and group settings are limited. Verbalization consists of one-word responses to teachers' questions.
School Environment	
All adults responsible for the instruction of ESL students encourage the use and mastery of the language arts in all subject areas. They introduce and model the listening,	Instruction in the language arts is relegated to language arts lessons. Teachers and other adults infrequently share their own readings and writings with students.

speaking, reading, writing, and thinking strategies that students are to employ.	
The entire school community supports and models effective listening, speaking, reading, and writing.	Members of the school community are apathetic about the importance of highly developed language arts abilities for ESL students; the focus for these students is minimum proficiency for survival purposes.
Planned curricular and extracurricular experiences facilitate positive student interactions inside and outside of class with native speakers of English.	ESL students do not participate in extracurricular activities and are kept in low-track classes or instructional groups separate from native speakers of English for the entire day.
ESL students receive general fund services supplemented by categorical funding for enrichment. There is a wide variety of printed, audiovisual, and manipulative materials for all ESL students at all levels of development and in all subject areas.	ESL students receive services paid only from categorical funds (Chapter 1, Migrant Education, EIA-LEP, etc.), which relieves the district from funding basic ESL services. Materials for ESL students are limited primarily to those provided for native English speakers.

Home Environment

Parents are encouraged to use their most fluent language when communicating with their children at home. There is frequent, systematic, and purposeful communication between the school and homes of the ESL students.	Parents are told to use only English even when they do not speak it well themselves. There are few, if any, successful attempts to communicate with the parents or guardians of these students.
Resources, both people and materials, from the ESL students' communities are integrated into the curriculum.	The school has not acknowledged, identified, or utilized the community resources or language groups represented in the ESL program.

Staff Development

The school's in-service programs frequently address:	There are rare opportunities for teacher training.
- Communication-based aural-oral skills development for ESL students	In-service programs do not address second-language development or strategies for teaching content to non-native speakers.
- Literature-based curriculum and methods for teaching ESL students - The nature of learning and development of higher order thinking processes	The ESL staff is omitted from literature-based staff development activities.

• ESL teaching competencies, including knowledge of language acquisition, assessment, cross-cultural and interpersonal communication skills, and content-based instruction • Writing process approaches • Collaborative implementation of staff development and new teaching strategies, collegial problem-solving, and coaching across curriculum areas	Only low-order cognitive skills are addressed in the training of ESL staff. ESL staff members are trained in rote drill and practice and are not updated on the integration of language processes, thinking, and concept development for ESL and content instruction. Approaches to teaching writing which emphasize form and correctness predominate. Staff members do not train together across curriculum areas, nor do they solve problems together or coach each other on new strategies.

Assessment

Staff members are trained and employ assessment practices which include authentic holistic measures aligned with the modes through which students learn the knowledge and skills being assessed. The evaluation of students' individual and group work in class over time is as important as formal testing in assessing student progress.	Staff members are provided no training in second-language assessment and use paper-and-pencil tests that are often the same ones given to native English speakers.
Credit is granted for work that meets the district's requirements in subject-matter classes in the native language of the student. There are provisions for placing students based on demonstrated proficiencies. All ESL classes count toward graduation requirements in English-language arts.	Graduation credit for English is not granted for all ESL work. Transcripts from other countries are not used to grant subject-matter credit. ESL students must take all classes in lockstep order without allowance for previous creditable coursework in their primary language or for demonstrated competencies.

Auxiliary Support

All adults who interact with ESL students demonstrate high expectations for these students and frequently recognize these students' strengths and progress publicly.	ESL students are perceived as slow learners and are placed in remedial tracks or instructional groups for language and content instruction.
The school library contains an extensive collection of materials which provide access to the core curriculum for ESL students, including supplementary and audiovisual materials. These are available in the native languages of the students as well as in English at a variety of proficiency levels, and there are personnel available to assist students in taking advantage of them.	Few or no books in the students' native language can be found in the library. Only books for native English speakers are available. There is no range of materials for beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESL students, nor are there personnel to assist these students in the library.

The school's guidance services, health services, and extracurricular activities are accessible to students still acquiring English.	Little or no native language support is available for guidance and health services, effectively precluding student access for those who speak little English. ESL students must wait until they have English skills to participate in extracurricular activities.
The special nature of ESL populations in terms of their refugee or immigrant status and possible migrant conditions are addressed by the school to minimize their negative effects on student learning.	The school policies reflect a lack of sensitivity or awareness of the adverse circumstances of many ESL students and the negative effects these conditions can have on student learning.
Teachers of other subjects recognize the special needs of ESL students and adjust their teaching accordingly by providing sheltered or bilingual instruction.	ESL students must wait until they have English proficiency before they can effectively study other subjects. Teachers of these subjects make no modification in their direct instruction in English.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The program integrates ESL instruction with the instruction that students receive in the core curriculum. They learn the ethics, values, customs, and beliefs that are prevalent in the United States and achieve cultural literacy. The processes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated throughout the ESL curriculum. Students learn to recognize and appreciate the interdependence of oral and written language as they use both for understanding and expressing ideas in a variety of fields of knowledge. They see language as a means for thinking and creative expression.

The ESL curriculum is communication-based and is supported by materials appropriate for students of preliterate to fluent English proficiency. These include literary works from the core curriculum, provided through nonprint media when necessary for students whose English proficiency does not yet permit them to experience the works fully through print. Students are also offered comparable selections in their native language if they are literate in that language. The literature available to students in ESL programs represents cultural and linguistic diversity in a variety of genres. Intermediate and advanced students in ESL programs read the core literature available for native English speakers.

ESL AND THE CONTENT AREAS

While they are developing English proficiency through ESL, students are also acquiring English through content instruction. All teachers use language in ways which ensure student comprehension, and content instruction provides opportunities for students to develop listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking skills in the language of all the core subjects--language arts, mathematics, science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, physical education, foreign language, and other subjects included in the school's curriculum.

INSTRUCTION

Instruction is developmental and includes a variety of communicative, meaning-based approaches which incorporate a range of thinking skills. All students receive teacher-directed and student-centered instruction which encourages them to respond effectively to subject matter. Activities promote active individual and cooperative learning. Instruction includes use of students' home languages and cultural experiences, promotes self-esteem, and reflects high expectations for all students. Classroom materials and activities draw on real life as well as on literature. Students' language proficiencies are nurtured through a variety of oral and written language development activities appropriately paced for students' developmental levels. Instruction addresses language needed for survival, for specific content areas, for varied social contexts, and for critical thinking. It also addresses pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar for refinement of fluency within the context of meaningful language and authentic activities. Students in ESL programs interact frequently with each other and with native speakers inside and outside of class in both formal and informal activities.

TRANSITION FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN ENGLISH

Oral language development precedes and prepares students specifically for initial reading and writing activities. ESL lessons ensure that preparation for reading and writing in English is well established, both aurally and orally, that expectations for written language are matched to oral language competence, that lessons ar based on students' prior knowledge, and that opportunities for the integration of oral and written language skills are provided. The district or school or both have written criteria and procedures that guide the decisions of the subject matter and ESL teachers on when to introduce students to formal English reading.

ESL methods and materials for students who are not literate in English rely heavily on students' background experiences. With nonliterate students, teachers use pictures, real objects, gestures, audio-visual materials, and other ways to convey meaning as students develop essential oral language and literacy skills. Flexible grouping in these aural/oral activities allows literate and nonliterate students to work together.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The school community accepts students' home languages and native cultures. Staff members also model the effective use of English and encourage students who are ready to use English for social and academic purposes. The school values and supports ESL students' efforts to acquire English, and all school personnel contribute to a climate of acceptance and welcome for these students and their families. Planned curricular and extracurricular experiences with native English speakers promote full access to school life for all ESL students.

HOME ENVIRONMENT

The school staff maintains frequent contact with the home through conferences, school events, and home visits. Parents are encouraged to nurture their home languages and cultures as a means of enriching their children's knowledge of their heritage and strengthening their self-concepts. Parents visit classrooms and share experiences of their homelands.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Student progress is evaluated by means that are consistent with instruction. Both subjective and objective measures are applied, including teacher observations, rating scales, student interviews, informal tests, standardized tests, and appraisals of students' work. The students and their parents have the opportunity to review the data collected and to respond.

ESL program assessment consists of multiple measures of program effectiveness, including achievement gains, staff and parent support, and observed use of English both inside and outside the context of the ESL program. Based on these data, changes in the program are made to ensure each student's maximum achievement.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

The principal, teachers, and other school personnel are well informed about the goals and objectives of the ESL program and offer their enthusiastic professional and material support. Qualified teaching and support staff are sensitive to and appreciative of ESL students' potential and strengths. They take an interest in listening to and speaking with the students about their interests, backgrounds, problems, and successes. They offer praise for students' accomplishments in learning English and in using English to communicate socially and during ESL and content instruction. The budget of the school reflects ESL expenditures from both district and categorical funds for materials, supplies, personnel, and staff training necessary to carry out an effective ESL program. To ensure student progress, there are appropriate staffing ratios, groupings of students, and time to plan for active student learning.

Materials of many levels of difficulty are available in the classroom and the media center. Both print and nonprint media are used. ESL students use tapes, records, computers, and other technology as resources for generating and receiving authentic communications. The room arrangement allows students to work individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class. Peer interaction with native speakers of English is encouraged, occurs regularly, and is effective in promoting positive social and linguistic outcomes.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative staff development among professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer staff members includes training in communication-based second language acquisition and literature-based language arts and subject-matter instruction in English for non-native speakers. The training promotes strategies for higher-order thinking, cross-cultural understanding, and ESL reading and writing. There are regular opportunities for collegial discussions and/or peer coaching related to the staff development program. Adequate planning time is provided for ESL and subject matter staff.

There is a program for the recruitment, selection, and training of staff to ensure qualified, well-prepared, and properly credentialed teachers. Teaching competencies include demonstrated proficiency in spoken and written English; experience in learning another language; understanding of other cultures; knowledge of first and second language acquisition theory and research; ability to use effective second language teaching strategies for ESL and subject-matter instruction; knowledge of the interrelationships among bilingual, ESL, and mainstream programs; and knowledge of first and second language assessment.

EXEMPLARS

Curriculum

- The ESL curriculum includes written standards of expected student achievement in developing communication skills, including :
  - Preproduction level--following simple commands

  - Intermediate fluency level--reading proficiency equal to aural understanding
  - Advanced level--discussions about personal history, leisure activities, core-content subjects, and current events

- Beginning ESL students grasp concepts through visuals, pantomime, role play, native language use, and other meaning-based activities. For the special needs, interests, cultural backgrounds, and abilities of the intermediate and advanced students, core, extended, and recreational works of literary merit are selected.

- A student-centered curriculum reflects students' own writings, projects, and oral and written expressions of personal opinions, ideas, and reactions to readings and activities. Students engage in activities similar to those developed in the California Writing Project: freewriting, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and postwriting.

ESL and Content Areas

- ESL and content teachers are familiar with the students' language proficiencies and use this knowledge to facilitate students' language and concept development.

- Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking are developed in specific core subjects through such sheltered English instructional strategies as:

  - Extensive use of audiovisuals, gestures, and other context clues
  - Access to native language support
  - Cooperative learning and other interactive activities
  - Meaning-based reading and writing activities consistent with the California writing and literature projects

Instruction

- Developmental language acquisition approaches :

  - Allow for the development of thinking and listening before production.
  - Use language related to real life.
  - Require teachers to expand on what students say by adding details natural to the context.
  - Involve questions for which multiple responses are appropriate and which offer unique response opportunities from students.
  - Require teachers to restate ungrammatical student utterances in correct form to clarify communication rather than correct student errors directly.
  - Follow a progression from preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and full fluency to meet the range of needs for preliterates, beginners, intermediate, and advanced ESL levels.

- Communicative ESL methods include total physical response (TPR), the natural approach, suggestopedia, information gap activities, the language experience approach, music and other rhythmic techniques, poetry, storytelling, role play, drama, reader's theater, games, affective activities related to confluent education and values clarification, critical thinking and problem-posing, cooperative learning, and computer-assisted instruction.

- Students acquire correct pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling, handwriting, and grammar through comprehensible input, meaningful modeling, and practice in personalized contexts, such as student-invented stories, individual spelling dictionaries, and peer reading/writing response groups for clarifying and expanding written work.

- Active student learning includes the promotion of cognitive learning strategies:
    - Self-monitoring--self-questioning, predicting
    - Rehearsal--repetition, copying, underlining
    - Elaboration--paired associations, analogies, metaphors
    - Information organizing--outlining, mapping, summarizing
    - Affective--focusing attention, self-rewards, self-praise
    - Personal--relating to prior knowledge, personal experience, and past events

- In all classes teachers treat their perceived low achievers in ways similar to how they treat their high achievers in terms of opportunities to respond, help in responses, and positive feedback; they create situations where all students' ideas are important.

- Students are provided an additive language environment in which they acquire a second language without abandoning their mother tongue.

Transition from Oral to Written English

- Preparation for reading and writing includes aural comprehension activities and having students read first that which they already understand and can produce orally (e.g., the language experience approach).

- Written standards for transition from oral to written English for ESL and content areas focus on students' strengths in using whole language to understand and communicate ideas, whether it be the language of language arts, mathematics, science, history-social science, visual and performing arts, physical education, or foreign language.

- Initial literacy activities include pantomime, manipulatives, picture-word files, copying and copy-change writing, invented spelling, choral reading and recitation, directed reading/writing and thinking activities, and native language support.

School Environment

- Students observe classified and certificated staff and adult volunteers effectively communicating in English with ESL students.

- Students in ESL programs participate in the full range of cocurricular and extracurricular activities, including sports, music, publications, and academic and social clubs.

- College preparatory and gifted and talented programs include a proportionate number of students in ESL programs.

- Students receive their share of general fund services before categorical funds are used for supplemental services.

Home Environment

- Teachers encourage parents to help their students to succeed in the program by visiting classes, encouraging homework, monitoring use of television and radio, and listening to and talking with their children in their strongest language.

- Initial and frequent home-school links include phone calls, parent conferences, school events, home visits, notes sent with students, and letters in a language the parents understand.

- Information about student progress is shared with parents, and they are given opportunities to collaborate in decisions affecting their children's education.

Classroom Resources

- The classroom has a variety of print and nonprint materials to meet the needs of all proficiency levels of students, including picture files, story files, magazines, books, tapes, computers, and other means for generating authentic communication. For intermediate and advanced ESL, resources in literature match the English-language arts curriculum in terms of versions in the native language, adaptations, and nonprint forms such as videotapes and video disks.
- The tables, chairs, and desks are arranged to facilitate individual, pair, small-group, and whole-class activities.

Evaluation and Assessment

- Students are placed on the basis of multiple criteria. Progress is measured through formal and informal means, including observation, proficiency scales, writing samples in the native language and English, other student work and portfolios, criterion-referenced measures, and selected norm-referenced instruments.
- All staff who work with ESL students receive training on interpreting assessment information, including observation instruments, rating scales, informal and standardized tests, and appraisals of student work.

Program Support

- ESL teachers and other teachers meet regularly to plan strategies and materials which are effective for various populations to maintain high standards of expected student achievement and promote student strengths.
- The school library, health office, guidance services, and other services actively support the needs of students in ESL programs at a level equal to services provided for native English speakers.
- Support for the core curriculum includes:
    - Different modes of instruction--visual, auditory, cooperative, competitive, primary language, sheltered English
    - High-intensity experiences involving frequent feedback, additional practice, and lower student-adult ratios
    - Varied activities and resources in order to meet the specialized instructional needs of the ESL population

Staff Development and Preparation

- The ESL staff receives training in communicative ESL approaches, including natural language, language experience, directed reading and thinking, and literature-based English-language arts consistent with the California writing and literature projects.
- Classroom teachers and ESL staff meet regularly to learn from and support each other. Their cooperative efforts ensure that their courses are developmental and are articulated as students progress through the grades. College-bound students meet university requirements, and all students develop competence in English-language arts.
- ESL teachers hold appropriate credentials and demonstrate competencies to work with students in the ESL program, including:
    - Demonstrated proficiency in spoken and written English
    - Experience in learning another language

- Understanding of other cultural systems
- Knowledge of first- and second-language acquisition theories
- Ability to use appropriate teaching strategies
- Knowledge of the interrelationships among bilingual, ESL, and content-area core curriculum and instruction in English
- Knowledge of first- and second-language assessment measures

RESOURCES

The following resource publications are available from the Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Becoming a Nation of Readers, 1985.
- English-Language Arts Framework, for California Public Schools, K-12, 1987.
- English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide, K-8, 1988.
- Foreign Language Framework for California Public Schools, 1989.
- Handbook for Planning an Effective Literature Program, K-12, 1988.
- Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program, K-12, 1986.
- Model Curriculum Standards, 9-12, 1985.
- Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process, 1987.
- Recommended Literature, 9-12, 1989.
- Recommended Readings in Literature, K-8, Annotated Edition, 1988.
- Recommended Readings in Literature, K-8, 1986.

The following resource publication is available for $10 from the University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Academic Interinstitutional Progams (UCLA/CAIP), 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024:

- Literature for All Students: A Sourcebook for Teachers, 1985.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The foreign language program develops students' proficiency in using the language to gain and give information for personal, social, professional, and educational purposes. This proficiency also includes cultural literacy relating to the societies that speak the language.

Foreign language instruction is student-centered and communication-based, and classroom business and learning activities are conducted in the foreign language.

Classroom activities include listening, speaking, reading, and writing about useful content. The language used is authentic, reflecting the language spoken and read in a society that uses the language. Assessment is holistic and competency-based.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average, limited-English-proficient, underachieving, and gifted and talented students; students receiving special education instruction and services; and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS
EFFECTIVE VERSUS INEFFECTIVE

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Curriculum	
Experiencing and learning about the world through a foreign language is the dominant activity in the foreign language program. Learning activities are organized to develop a steady growth in communicative proficiency. Higher levels of proficiency are attained by repeated use of language functions at increasingly higher levels. Communicative practice takes place in actual or simulated everyday situations.	Structure drills and exercises are the major student activities. Language components are memorized and practiced as isolated entities. Higher levels of proficiency are viewed as more vocabulary, more complex grammar, more difficult texts to translate, and fewer grammatical errors. Opportunities for authentic communication are limited.
Students encounter cross-cultural similarities and differences in their communicative tasks, and culture is an integral aspect of the language acquisition process.	Culture is treated as a separate issue. Students learn about customs, traditions, institutions, foods, and social formalities in separate lessons.
The language of the teacher and all learning materials are representative of what is heard and read in societies where the	The language used is contrived and out of context. It is chosen to illustrate certain linguistic forms and patterns.

language predominates. Significant literature serves as the source of much of the language used and modeled and is chosen to enhance students' general knowledge and understanding.	Literature is often translated and often chosen for its aesthetic reputation or grammatical structures.
Instruction	
Students acquire communicative proficiency by constantly comprehending and using the language, demonstrating comprehension of new expressions before using them. They practice communicating in meaningful contexts and realistic situations.	The teacher leads the students through structure drills and illustrates and explains the rules. The teacher has students memorize expressions and dialogues and recite them without checking for understanding. The whole class often engages in choral response.
Students practice and interact in pairs and small groups. They gain and give information in varied, individual ways. They move about, handle props, regroup, demonstrate, pantomime, use technology, play roles, write notes, and read while acquiring communicative competencies.	Teachers instruct and guide students primarily on a whole-class basis. They provide scripted dialogues for student interaction. Students are required to remain in assigned seats under direct teacher control most of the time.
Students use the language freely, and they probe and experiment beyond what has been learned thoroughly. Teachers encourage such efforts and guide and support students in developing new ways of expression. They provide opportunities for students to engage in negotiation of meaning, divergent thinking, and open-ended interaction.	Teachers constantly correct students when they make errors. They require students to remain within the safe bounds of carefully controlled language material and lessons.
Students enjoy using the language outside the classroom. They are stimulated and guided to interact socially and to read the language for pleasure.	Teachers prefer students to use the language under direct teacher supervision. Reading is selected and assigned by the teacher, and assignments are checked for correct grammar, usage, interpretation, or translation.
Students move through a variety of interesting, well-paced activities during an instructional period.	Teachers stay with one topic, lesson, or unit until it is completed.
Content	
Language learning experiences focus on useful content. Through communicative activities students expand their knowledge of the other culture and people, of other subjects in the local curriculum, and of international issues.	Language learning centers on language structures. Minimal importance is attached to context or to the information that is transmitted by the structures.

Materials and Resources

Materials support the development of communicative proficiency. Exercises and activities are communication-centered, contextualized, and content-focused.	Materials are designed to provide explanations and exercises of language components, such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Exercises and language activities are often disconnected, mechanical, and grammar-centered. Lesson format and sequence are dictated by the order in which Latin grammar has been traditionally taught.
Computers are used to stimulate communicative activities of various kinds, especially student-student exchanges. Videos and films provide communicative stimuli and information in culturally authentic settings and situations.	Computers provide opportunities for supplementary language analysis and drill only. Student interaction is limited to generating predetermined answers and rejoinders. Video and film provide travelogues or passive encounters with the target culture.

Support

The district supports an articulated K-12 program in several foreign languages with communication-based curricula, appropriate materials, and trained teachers. The school staff values foreign language instruction and promotes student enrollment.	The district provides a few semesters of foreign language instruction in one or two languages, with little provision for articulation or proficiency-based placement. The district makes do with an outdated curriculum guide and outdated materials. Counselors and administrators do not actively support and promote growth in the foreign language program.

Evaluation

Evaluation procedures match the communicative objectives of the program. There is ongoing assessment of the kinds and quality of messages students can understand and produce. Students are placed in the program on the basis of a communicative proficiency rating. Proficiency testing measures a student's performance while engaged in a communicative activity.	Evaluation instruments measure knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Objective tests predominate; students choose the best answers or responses. Placement is based on a student's previous grades and courses completed.

CURRICULUM

The foreign language curriculum consists of a core of useful communicative functions, content, and cultural features. Students employ the language in realistic situations that include listening, speaking, reading, and writing in appropriate cultural contexts. The curriculum also includes culturally appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and voice modulations; social conventions and everyday living activities; academic subjects and literature; occupations; and current events. Students develop proficiency in getting and giving information in the language, expressing feelings, evaluating and commenting, regulating activities, organizing speech, and ensuring understanding. They practice these language functions in such contexts as traveling, shopping, eating, personal affairs, education, occupations, social customs, the arts, science, current affairs, politics, government, house and home, public services, and interpersonal relationships. Specific themes and topics are chosen to meet students' interests and needs. Languages offered include several from Europe or the Pacific Rim, classical languages, the native languages of students at the school, American Indian languages, or American Sign Language.

INSTRUCTION

Communication-based instruction develops students who can use the language to get things done. After initial language modeling and input by a nativelike model, students engage in communicating most of the instructional time. Instruction is student centered, involving much interaction in the foreign language between students, students and teachers, and students and materials. The teacher serves mainly as a language model, coach, and facilitator, encouraging students to use the language freely without fear of constant correction. Small-group activities are employed often to promote maximum interaction. Students are motivated to extend themselves beyond their most comfortable range in all language modes in order to develop higher levels of communicative competence. Learning activities are varied and fast-paced. Teachers provide students with suggestions and opportunities to use the language beyond the classroom.

MATERIALS

Written and audiovisual materials provide students with authentic language and cultural encounters for practice in communicating. Computers serve as communicative partners or links with partners. Materials and technologies are used also to stimulate interaction between students in the classroom. Common objects, models, cutouts, drawings, and pictures are used to trigger communicative activities; students ask questions, express feelings, tell stories, write, hypothesize, and read in the target language.

SUPPORT

The school district allots sufficient resources to the foreign language program and provides for a student/teacher ratio that facilitates communicative activities. Teachers have time to meet and plan an effective program. The district has an articulated K-12 foreign language program with a placement procedure based on proficiency in the language. Only qualified foreign language teachers are assigned to teach foreign languages.

EVALUATION

Evaluation measures how well students can understand and produce messages in the foreign language. Criteria include the quantity of specific functions and vocabulary the students can use in communicating, the cultural literacy exhibited, structural accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation. The major consideration, however, is a holistic assessment of the degree to which messages are being understood as intended. The degree of success of the students in communicating, using authentic language or real-life situations, determines the effectiveness of the foreign language program.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

There is a planned staff development program that supports instruction for communication-based language acquisition. Teachers have a role in such planning and have time for peer observation, peer coaching, regular collegial discussions, and problem-solving. Opportunities are provided to meet with outside consultants, attend conferences and workshops, and visit other successful programs. Teachers are urged to travel or study abroad, participate in teacher exchange programs, attend university classes, try new teaching strategies, and share new ideas with their colleagues.

EXEMPLARS

- The foreign language program is guided by a curriculum that:
  - Delineates the core communicative functions and content to be acquired by students at each proficiency level
  - Suggests effective instructional strategies for attaining communicative proficiency in the classroom
  - Describes expected students' performances at each successive stage of proficiency
  - Prescribes assessment procedures for determining students' attainment of proficiency objectives
  - Emphasizes cultural skills and knowledge as integral parts of language acquisition
  - Suggests materials and activities for enhancing students' learning of the core curriculum
- During the more elementary stages of foreign language learning, students:
  - Listen to and comprehend talk about basic objects and actions.
  - Follow and eventually give simple commands and instructions.
  - Understand references to numbers, colors, weather, time, and so forth.
  - Emulate basic cultural conventions and formalities, including gestures and body language, and learn about cultural differences.
  - Understand and respond to basic greetings and leave-taking expressions, using appropriate words, gestures, and actions.
  - Learn about and practice holiday traditions as celebrated in the target culture.
  - Practice writing messages that have been conveyed orally and read for information in a variety of genres.
  - Listen to and comprehend stories and respond to questions about the stories; pantomime or act out what is heard.
  - Take part in simulated everyday activities, such as buying things, eating, talking about the weather, preparing foods, visiting the doctor, following directions, enumerating, playing games, and identifying things and people.
  - Listen to and comprehend videotapes, recorded conversations, stories, and film excerpts, and work with specially designed computer programs.
  - Interact with more advanced students or native speakers.
- During stages of foreign language learning beyond the elementary or novice levels, students:

- Engage in simple conversations about everyday topics with some spontaneity.
- Narrate simple series of events when cued by a picture series or other stimuli.
- Describe the basic physical qualities of things and people.
- Play conversational roles in simulated, unrehearsed, everyday situations.
- Retell simple stories they have heard, read, or seen enacted.
- Exchange information, recordings, videos, magazines, and so forth with a class in a country where the target language is spoken.
- Simulate telephone conversations, including the calling and answering routines encountered in the target society.
- Work on projects in the foreign language, according to individual interests, involving various aspects of the culture and country where the language is spoken.
- Prepare short talks on topics of individual interest.

- Students in more advanced levels of instruction:
  - Display considerable evidence of grammatical control when engaged in conversation.
  - Engage in discussions beyond basic everyday conversation that relates to students' personal histories, leisure-time activities, current events, and literature.
  - Write letters, compositions, and stories.
  - Read literature appropriate to their age and language proficiency level.
  - Participate in activities featuring careers involving or requiring proficiency in a foreign language.
  - Work on higher-order thinking skills in the target language.
  - Write longer compositions and essays in the foreign language, using approaches similar to those in the California Writing Project.
  - Write and act in skits and short plays.
  - Use the language outside the classroom.

RESOURCES

The following publications are available from Bureau of Publications, Sales Unit, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 (phone: 916-445-1260):

- Foreign Language Framework, for California Public Schools, K-12, 1989.
- Handbook for Planning an Effective Foreign Language Program, 1985.
- Model Curriculum Standards, 9-12, 1985.
- Statement on Competencies in Languages Other Than English Expected of Entering Freshmen: Phase I -- French, German, Spanish, 1988.
- Technology in the Curriculum: Foreign Language (resource guide and diskette), 1987.

STUDENTS IN TRANSITION:
THE CULTURE OF THE MIDDLE GRADES

The culture of a school reflects the vision and the basic assumptions shared by members of the school community. A school's culture not only reflects its shared values, sense of mission, dominant ideas, philosophy, and history but also serves to guide the way people within the school community carry out their work and how they think about the school. Students in the middle grades are in transition from childhood to adolescence. Their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, and ethical development as they progress through the middle grades has profound implications for how the school is organized and operated and for the nature of the instructional program provided to them. Students in the middle grades should be engaged in a lively, playful, exploratory encounter with a horizon-expanding curriculum and a faculty who love teaching it and who are committed to the successful development of each student. This criterion describes such a middle grades culture.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

STUDENT-CENTERED PHILOSOPHY

A student-centered philosophy permeates the culture of the middle grades. Administrators, teachers, other staff members, and parents are committed to providing a program in which all students experience daily excellence in curriculum and instructional practices in an environment that provides multiple opportunities for each student's abilities and personality to unfold. Staff members are knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of young adolescents; they care about the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, and ethical development of the students as well as their academic achievement. Teachers enjoy working with the students, and they communicate that enjoyment directly and continuously through their interactions with them. Teachers believe that they can and do make a difference in the lives of their students, and they reach out to them with energy, excitement, respect, and creativity.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum, the instructional practices employed, and the organization of the school all reflect the developmental characteristics of young adolescents. The master schedule of the school conveys the student-centered philosophy of the middle grades; it offers every student the opportunities to realize the full benefits of the school program. A combination of extended blocks of learning time and other shorter periods, a variety of instructional methods and materials, and advisory and group guidance activities are routinely used to accommodate the core curriculum, as well as exploratory and elective courses, and to achieve the academic, social, and personal objectives of students in the master schedule. Faculty members recognize the importance of the students' relations with their peers and design instructional strategies and employ other activities which capitalize on these relations. Study skills are a part of each student's preparation for success in the middle grades and high school.

Small groups of teachers share students in common and have the time and facilities to work collegially in planning curriculum and instructional activities which will most effectively engage their students in the school program.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

The atmosphere of the school is lively yet orderly, playful yet purposeful. A sense of the joy of learning pervades the classrooms. High academic standards are supported by every member of the staff and reinforced daily in interactions with the students. All students are expected to achieve these standards and teachers respond to their frustrations with understanding, humor, and persistence. There are rewards, recognition, and incentives for all expressions of student excellence in every area of the curriculum and other schoolwide activities. In addition, teachers, guidance staff members, administrators, students, and parents have jointly embraced high standards for personal and social behavior which are systematically reinforced in the daily conduct of school activities. The standards are clearly stated, widely communicated, and justly administered. The rules emphasize positive qualities; restrictive measures for controlling negative behavior are minimal.

A POSITIVE SCHOOL SPIRIT

A positive school spirit is evident throughout the school. Students are proud of their school and enthusiastic about the school program. They like being at school and feel valued by their teachers, the administrators, and other staff members. Students know what is expected of them academically and socially, and they work persistently to meet those expectations. Teachers, guidance staff members, and administrators continuously strive to create and maintain an environment that enhances the self-esteem of each student. They are dedicated to providing timely and appropriate guidance to help students transition successfully through the middle grades and are positive role models for the students. Through thoughtful guidance and counsel and with examples drawn from literature, history, the visual and performing arts and humanities, all staff members work to instill in each student the traditional values of commitment to hard work, personal responsibility, honesty, cooperation, humor, the joy of learning, self-discipline, freedom, appreciation of human diversity, and the importance of education.

SCHOOL LEADERS

The principal and other school leaders stimulate activities that focus the creative energies of the organization so that the mission of the school shapes the everyday behavior of teachers and students. They also provide guidance and support to teachers striving to refine their skills and knowledge. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative; to try new methods, materials, and activities; and to evaluate continually their efforts to engage all their students more fully in the learning tasks. There are frequent informal discussions of educational issues among staff members. Teachers work together to plan an instructional program that challenges each student to learn while recognizing the specific developmental requirements of these students in transition. Collaboration among staff members to improve the quality of their program and the experiences of their students as they transition through the middle grades is a hallmark of the school.

THE PARENTS

The parents of middle grade students know and understand the focus of the middle grades program. They act as partners with teachers and other staff members in helping their children develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that will prepare them for the broadest possible range of academic pursuits in high school.

The administrators and teachers readily enlist the support and active involvement of parents in the middle grades program.

EXEMPLARS

- The culture of the middle grades reflects total staff commitment to academics, the study skills and habits which support them, and a pervasive sense of caring about each student's needs and goals.

- In their day-to-day interactions, teachers, administrators, and other staff members reassure and encourage the students as they transition from childhood to adolescence, from the security of self-contained classrooms to the confusion and pressures of many classrooms and teachers, from teacher-directed learning to more independent learning. They recognize that students are forming values which they will hold for the rest of their lives, and they reinforce and model the values appropriate to an educated citizen in a democratic society.

- Staff members and administrators like middle grades students, and they are knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of the students. The school program is designed to be responsive to the developmental characteristics of young adolescents. These characteristics include but are not limited to:

  - High energy levels
  - Restlessness
  - Growing ability for reflective thought
  - Peer orientation
  - Curiosity about self and others
  - Uneven physical development
  - Psychological changes resulting from hormonal and other chemical changes
  - Growing capacity to engage in moral and ethical reasoning

- The master schedule reflects the student-centered philosophy of the school and responds to the transitional nature of the students through the provision of:

  - Advisory classes
  - Homerooms
  - Academic counseling
  - Individual and group guidance activities
  - Extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities

- The atmosphere of the school is lively with playfulness and humor, yet purposeful about the academic development of each student. Teachers and administrators actively promote the joy and satisfaction of learning.

- There is a schoolwide commitment to academic excellence and high standards of personal behavior. Teachers and administrators model such behavior in their daily interactions with students and each other through such means as:

  - Expecting that all students will attain the standards set and providing encouragement and support as students work toward those standards
  - Showing respect for each other in all day-to-day activities
  - Displaying persistence and humor in their relations with students and with each other
  - Showing that they enjoy working with the students and that they care about the academic, personal, and social development of each student

- Students help define standards of behavior. Parents are knowledgeable about and support the academic and behavioral standards and they reinforce these standards at home.

- Students feel secure at school. They display positive values and attitudes toward themselves and others. The school buildings and campus are clean, well cared for, and are free of any evidence of graffiti or vandalism.

- Teachers regularly talk with individual students regarding personal and social issues in order to affirm the students' self-worth, encourage problem solving, and to ameliorate negative influences which have the potential to compromise academic achievement.

  Teachers:

  - Serve as advisors to individual students.
  - Have regularly scheduled conference times.
  - Communicate periodically with the parents of all their students.

- Teachers, administrators, and other staff members work together to define and sustain a schoolwide culture that instills intellectual values and lifelong commitment to learning in all students. They involve students in learning tasks that encourage them to confront and seek to resolve the issues that will shape the framework of their adult values. They teach study skills, study habits, and cognitive strategies which students need as a foundation for academic success in high school and beyond. They know their subject areas and they enjoy teaching.

- The principal and other leaders express commitment to the common purposes and goals of the school program and concern for excellence in teaching and learning. They provide the time, materials, and support necessary for staff members to collaborate in planning and implementing curricular and instructional improvement. They encourage initiative, creativity, and innovation among teachers, and they respect and give recognition to their work.

- Communication between the school and the parents is ongoing. Parents are informed about the school program and how their children are performing at school. Parent participation in school events is actively solicited.

THE CURRICULUM OF THE MIDDLE GRADES

The subject matter of the middle grades is centered in a common, comprehensive, academically oriented curriculum which comprises the core of knowledge which all educated citizens should possess. All middle grade students are actively engaged in learning this core curriculum. In addition, middle grade students have opportunities through other curricular activities to explore divergent ways of thinking, feeling, and believing; to experience new academic disciplines; to understand and contrast various cultures, people, languages, and ways of living; and to explore different career options, their own special interests, and various hobby and leisure-time activities. Participation in these activities enables students to establish friendships with other students and adults in a variety of contexts. This criterion focuses on the total curriculum of middle grade students--the common, comprehensive core, exploratory, and elective curricula as well as extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including limited-English-proficient students, students achieving at a level significantly below their peers, gifted and talented students, and students making normal progress in the district's core curriculum.

COMMON CORE

All middle grade students experience a common, comprehensive core curriculum in reading/literature, language arts, mathematics, science, history and geography, visual and performing arts, and physical education. This curriculum emphasizes the major ideas and themes of each discipline and is designed so that each student will develop a broad background of knowledge and the abilities to think, communicate, and learn which are essential to success in secondary and post-secondary education. In learning this core curriculum, students are becoming increasingly more able to perceive relationships and to make connections between what they are learning in the different disciplines. By relating literature to historical events; by connecting the lives of people to achievements in mathematics, science, and the arts; and by developing greater understanding of how these events and people have helped shape the world in which we live, students increase their perspective of who they are, how they fit into the world around them, and how that world functions. All students have opportunities to explore beyond the core in each discipline as well as to learn its major concepts and skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The core curriculum capitalizes on the academic, social, and personal developmental characteristics of young adolescents. It is designed to relate to adolescents' heightened curiosity about themselves and the world in which they live and to emphasize issues of growing importance to them. These issues include ethical, moral, and social concerns of particular significance to them and humanity. These issues are the focus of reading, writing, and discussions within each discipline. The young adolescents' awakening abilities and interests in reasoning are also the foundation of most major assignments and discussions. Problem solving, spatial reasoning, and logic are central to daily activities in mathematics. Hypothetical thinking, speculation, and verification are regular activities for all students in science. Critical thinking and ethical reasoning characterize activities in literature and history. Aesthetic judgment and creative expression are developed in visual and performing arts. Similarly, the young adolescents' need to be active is treated as a strength; in all disciplines there is frequent use of projects, concrete materials, fieldwork, library research, and small-group activities. As students progress through the curriculum they are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for and control over their learning.

EXPLORATORY/ELECTIVE CURRICULA

Middle grade students have many opportunities outside the core curriculum to explore a variety of new and interesting skills, knowledge, and experiences through the exploratory curriculum and to enhance their skills through the elective curriculum. All students participate in the exploratory and elective curricula. Neither a lack of mastery of academic and personal skills nor limited proficiency in English restricts students' participation. The scheduling of exploratory and elective courses ensures that all students at each grade level have access to these courses.

The exploratory courses allow students to survey broad themes and topics of potential interest to them. They open doors to new categories of knowledge and skills and they give students a broadened sense of the scope of academic, vocational, and avocational possibilities available to them as adults. Students are encouraged to explore courses which expose them to many new skills, facts, understandings, and experiences rather than specializing in a few courses of particular interest to them. Exploratory and elective courses as well as extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities are directly related to the knowledge, skills, and values being developed in the comprehensive core curriculum and give added meaning and purpose to the total curriculum experienced by the middle grade students. The elective courses allow all students to pursue their particular interests in the visual and performing arts, foreign languages, the practical arts, and other areas complementary to the core. Students are enthusiastic about the exploratory and elective courses they are taking. The instructional strategies and materials that teachers use capture students' imagination and hold their attention. Teachers also are enthusiastic about these courses, and they teach them with the same thoughtful preparation and presentation that they use in teaching the core curriculum.

EXTRACURRICULAR, COCURRICULAR, AND INTRAMURAL ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities are open to all students. Staff members offer a rich variety of activities, and they encourage all students to become active participants. The students enjoy the activities and gain self-esteem from the sense of pride they derive from successful participation. The extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities promote positive interaction between teachers and students. Teachers are able to help students excel in a wide variety of activities, to gain the recognition of their peers and other staff members, and to develop a greater sense of connection to the school.

EXEMPLARS

- All students experience a full, balanced curriculum which includes:
  - Language Arts, including literature
  - Mathematics
  - Science, including Health
  - History-Social Science, including Geography
  - Visual and Performing Arts
  - Physical Education, including Health
  - Advisement
  - Elective/exploratory courses
  - Extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities

- Teachers identify and use issues of primary importance to young adolescents as the basis for assignments and related educational experiences. These issues include:
  - Who am I?
  - Who cares about me?
  - What and whom do I care about?
  - What kind of person do I want to become?
  - What do I have to do to become such a person?
  - What kind of society and world to I want to live in?
  - What can I do to make such a society and world?

- The staff provides that, within the total curriculum experienced by the students, there are:
  - Extended blocks of uninterrupted instructional time for selected core curriculum courses, e.g., English-language arts and history-social science
  - Interdisciplinary instructional planning
  - Team, collaborative, and independent teaching modes
  - Regularly scheduled planning time for teachers and teacher teams
  - Diverse elective and exploratory curricula
  - Extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities which do not conflict with instructional time assigned to the core curriculum
  - Access by all students to the full range of the school's curriculum offerings and to all school-based learning resources including media centers, labs, studios, shops, gymnasiums, music rooms, and other specialized facilities
  - Access to varied types of counseling and guidance including student advisory and health support services
  - Accomplishment of administrative tasks (e.g., attendance, lunch counts, and ticket sales) without interrupting time regularly allocated to instruction in the core curriculum
  - Innovation and experimentation with varied time configurations of the day, week, month, or semester according to course priorities and instructional requirements

- The major areas of the common core curriculum are developed through direct reference to the state's curriculum frameworks, handbooks, curriculum guides (K-8), and the Model Curriculum Standards.

- The course of study for all students includes enrollment in the common core curriculum and participation in selected elective and exploratory curricula irrespective of individual strengths or weaknesses in basic skill development.

- Exploratory and elective courses augment, enrich, and supplement the core curriculum. They are offered as a regular part of the school's weekly schedule but never substitute for the core curriculum. All students have the opportunity to learn a foreign language as part of their elective program.

- Exploratory courses provide a wealth of hands-on experiences for students.
  - Teachers share with the students their particular talents and interests through active learning activities and through the exploratory courses.
  - Teachers use the exploratory courses to try out new ideas and innovative instructional strategies.
  - Students are encouraged to pursue their interests in the topics of the exploratory courses beyond the length and scope of the course.

- Teachers fully utilize the resources of the community when developing exploratory and elective courses, including the talents and skills of the parents and other community members.

- Extracurricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities are open to all students, and all students, including girls and students who are experiencing difficulty in the core curriculum, are urged to participate. They include activities such as:

  - Interest clubs
  - Science fairs
  - Pep squads
  - Volunteer community projects
  - In-school scouting programs
  - Intramural sports
  - Academic competitions

- The bus schedule as well as the school schedule permit maximum student participation in extracurricular and intramural activities.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

This criterion focuses on the instructional practices used by middle grades teachers to involve their students actively in learning the facts, concepts, and higher-order thinking skills of the curriculum. This criterion addresses the extent to which instruction (1) capitalizes on the developmental characteristics of the young adolescents; (2) uses active learning strategies; (3) promotes interactive learning through the use of questioning techniques, cooperative learning activities, and group or individual projects; (4) develops thinking and communication skills in all areas of the curriculum; and (5) teaches students learning strategies and study skills through lessons and assignments that are designed to help students become independent learners.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including limited-English-proficient students, students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students making normal progress in the district's core curriculum.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Teachers use instructional practices that are appropriate to the structure and substance of the subjects they teach and to the developmental characteristics of the middle grade students. Teachers offer a balanced diet of direct instruction, student-centered learning activities, and other strategies that capture the eagerness and energy of the students. Instruction accommodates the diversity of students' learning styles, interests, and developmental readiness; the content to be learned; and the individual strengths of teachers. Students are actively involved intellectually and physically in their learning tasks. Teachers build upon students' curiosity about themselves and their world, channeling their energies into quests for information through discussions, organized research, projects, presentations, and performances. All students are involved in these learning activities. Teachers capitalize on students' interest in their peers by structuring small-group learning activities, including student study groups. They organize cross-age and peer tutoring, and they expect students to learn with other students as well as independently. Teachers periodically use grouping practices which allow all students -- high, average, and low achievers -- to work interdependently with one another toward common goals.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Students have many opportunities for hands-on activities. They explore sources of written information, including original source documents, and use their increasing research capabilities to find answers through their own efforts. They work individually and with their peers on projects that require them to integrate knowledge of facts, understanding of ideas, and conceptual models which they either encounter or create. These projects enable them to draw upon the most important ideas, concepts, and skills being learned in core curriculum while challenging them to master increasingly complex mental processes.

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES

Teachers utilize questioning techniques that give all students opportunities to participate equally, that give them time to organize their thoughts, and that help them reach conclusions based on reason, values, and evidence. There is a balance between questions designed to elicit a right answer and those designed to elicit students' personal judgments, perspectives, and background experiences. Students have many opportunities to use higher-order thinking skills. They analyze and synthesize information, pose questions at a variety of levels, explore and experiment in explaining their reasoning, apply different strategies and solutions to problems posed by their teachers or peers, and evaluate the proposed strategies and solutions. Teachers establish classroom environments which encourage thinking and intellectual risk taking. Assignments increasingly challenge all students to use the methods of thought and communication which are conventions of the subject being taught.

At each middle grade level and in each subject area, students learn the most appropriate and effective strategies for approaching and completing assignments. They develop a variety of learning strategies and study skills to use in independent study, group work, and tutorial instruction. They use these skills and strategies to explore new categories of knowledge and to pursue personal academic goals. Teachers work with all students as they progress through the middle grades to empower them to become increasingly more responsible for and in control of their own learning.

MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTION

The instructional materials that students use validate, extend, enhance, and enrich the core curriculum. The materials actively involve the students in their learning activities, encourage them to go beyond the core curriculum, and expand their independent learning abilities. Assignments are challenging, varied, engaging, developmental, coordinated, and outcome-oriented. Teachers make use of nonprint materials, including technology and community resources, as well as fiction and nonfiction to supplement textbooks. Students understand the purpose of their assignments, what they are expected to do, and what they will learn by completing the work. They receive timely feedback on their completed assignments, and those experiencing difficulty are given extra assistance or alternative assignments. Homework is assigned regularly and made a part of daily lessons.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for students' learning are clearly defined and consistently reinforced. Grading policies and standards are known to all students and parents and are monitored to ensure equitable and uniform application throughout the school. Teachers use a variety of assessment procedures to evaluate student progress, and students are regularly informed of their progress and given specific suggestions for improvement. Parents also are kept informed of their children's progress and are given a role in helping their children improve their academic work.

EXEMPLARS

- All teachers are knowledgeable in the subject(s) they teach, and the instructional strategies they utilize are particularly appropriate to the structure and substance of each subject area. Teachers work together across the grade levels and in interdisciplinary teams to plan the most effective instructional strategies. The instructional strategies used at each grade level reflect the intellectual, social, and physical maturational level of the students.

- Teachers use hands-on activities, real-life situations, a variety of questioning strategies, assignments of individual and group projects, and a wealth of instructional materials, including instructional technology, to engage each student in active learning of the curriculum.

- In posing questions to their students, teachers give students time to think and compose their answers; they randomly call on students and give all students equal opportunity to answer, recite, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

- All students are equally involved in active learning activities; no students are excluded because of academic ability or limited proficiency in English.

- Heterogeneous grouping is a feature of the school. Ability grouping and tracking are not the only grouping strategies of the classroom or the school organization.

- Students are encouraged to invest in each other's success at school through peer tutoring, group projects, peer assistance activities, and so forth.

- Instructional practices in schools with high concentrations of students in poverty reflect the students' need for acceleration, rather than remediation. Instructional settings and practices for these students are rich in experiences and materials that enhance the core curriculum. For all students experiencing difficulty in learning, the curriculum, instruction, and advisement are designed to help and enrich rather than remediate.

- Lessons and assignments in all curricular areas are designed to teach students to become collaborative as well as competitive and independent learners. Teachers ensure that each student:

    - Understands the task to be accomplished, knows ways to accomplish it, and knows ways to evaluate her or his progress toward completion of the assignment
    - Knows how to find new information; how to relate the new to what is already known; how to ask questions, formulate and test hypotheses, and present findings and conclusions; how to develop models and other methods for displaying or describing problems and solutions; and how to reflect upon the changes in perception, attitude, and values that accompany new knowledge and understandings
    - Has the essential study skills, learning strategies, and confidence needed for independent and collaborative learning

- Students experience a complete learning cycle when learning new content:

    - They are prepared for the new content.
    - The content is introduced.
    - The students apply the content, first with guidance and feedback, and then independently.
    - Finally, they transfer the content to new situations, synthesizing it with other content.

- Teachers use homework to extend regular classroom experiences and to help students develop increased responsibility for their own learning.

  Homework assignments:

    - Arouse curiosity, raise questions for further exploration, and foster self-discipline.
    - Give students a chance to try out in practical ways the things they are learning in the classroom.
    - Are responded to immediately and with clarity by the assigning teacher.
    - Are coordinated among the curriculum areas by the assigning teacher to avoid overloading the students.
    - Are often designed to involve parents as teachers, learners, audience, and supporters of the student's learning experiences.

- Teachers provide an array of instructional materials for students to use as tools in achieving curricular goals. The materials include textbooks for basic information; trade books to extend and enhance cultural literacy; journal articles, newspapers, and editorials to reflect public opinion; and essays to provoke students' reflective thought. The library/media center is well-used by all students.

- Teachers encourage and challenge all students to use technology, such as videos, microcomputers and software programs, and calculators in completing assignments, working on projects, and conducting library and hands-on research.

- Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessment procedures to monitor students' achievement in the core curriculum and students' development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, creative expression, social responsibility, cultural literacy, moral and ethical reasoning, and progress toward becoming independent as well as collaborative learners. Use of true-false and multiple-choice tests is limited.

STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

The student support system is designed to help students select and follow a course through the academic program of the middle grades which will meet their personal, social, and academic goals while helping them cope with the fears and uncertainties of being an adolescent.

The support system is tied to the developmental characteristics of the middle grade student, and it reflects the attitudes, behaviors, and values that the adults at the school hold for the students. All staff members, the parents of the students, and the students themselves participate in the delivery of the services of the support system. The support system demonstrates the care which people invest in the education of these students in transition and the hopes they have for them now and in the future.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, those students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

SCHOOL SERVICES

The student support system provides each student with those school services which the student needs in order to maximize his or her physical, academic, personal, and social goals. All students are aware of the information they need in order to make thoughtful, timely decisions about school curriculum and its implications for their future academic and career choices. Teachers and other staff members not only understand the focus, scope, and flow of their academic program, they also know how it connects with the curricula that precede and follow the middle grades. Through regular discussions, they help their students become aware of how topics of study in the various subject areas relate to each other, both across grade levels and as separate disciplines, and how what they are learning in these grades is preparing them for high school and beyond. Open and ongoing communication among guidance staff members and teachers ensures that each student receives timely, accurate, and specific guidance and advice in making academic decisions that keep open the full range of future academic and career options. All teachers perceive themselves as a critical part of the student support system. Through affirmation and motivation that encourage students to exert their highest and best scholastic efforts, teachers work with guidance staff to help each student develop a clear concept of his or her potential as a student and as a human being.

ACADEMIC CHOICES

Parents are aware of the academic opportunities, course choices, and the consequences of academic decisions made during the middle grades. They are knowledgeable of the relationship between the middle grade and high school curricula and are able to encourage and support their children's efforts to attain their highest academic goals.

All students participate in advisement activities. Time is regularly scheduled for advisement. Administrators provide timely and helpful support to the advisors, including in-service activities, and there is an established curriculum with clear objectives mutually agreed upon by the advisors. Administrators and staff members consider advisement an integral and essential part of their school program. Parents are knowledgeable about advisement and support the objectives of advisement.

SCHOOL PRACTICES

Teachers, administrators, and other staff members are sensitive to the developmental status of each of their students and are willing to adapt all school practices to their students' intellectual, biological, and social maturation. Staff believe they are significant in the lives of the young adolescents enrolled in the school and deliberately enhance student-adult interaction in order to personalize the student support system and to reach out to each student. Guidance staff and teachers are proactive in working with students experiencing academic, personal, or social difficulties. The design of instructional and guidance procedures and activities involves them in long-term, helping relationships with their students so that teachers or other staff members get to know all the students. Students help other students through peer assistance and cross-age tutoring. Students are able to help each other overcome difficulties that are getting in the way of achieving success. They also build bridges to the adults so that students needing help can take advantage of the professional services available in the school and community, specifically health support services and social services systems.

EQUAL ACCESS

All students have equal access to the services of the student support system, including students of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities, limited-English-proficient students, students at risk of dropping out, and other students with special needs. They have full access to services designed to help their developmental transition from childhood to adulthood, to open channels of communication, to participate in cocurricular and extracurricular activities, and to overcome any difficulties which may be an obstacle to their optimal development. All students are taught study skills and cognitive learning strategies which help them better meet the demands of the core curriculum and become successful students. The school program provides a vartiety of support services and strategies to promote all students' success in the regular program. Deliberate, affirmative, and serious efforts to help at-risk students succeed in the middle grades permeate the school support system.

EXEMPLARS

- The student support services promote the development of students' character, enhance the potential for the realization of their academic goals, and provide for the physical and emotional health needs of the students.

- Students know why they are in school, why they are taking the courses they are taking, what they will take next, and how the courses they are taking fit together to form the basis of the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in high school. They also see relationships between what they are learning now and postsecondary academic and vocational choices.

- Teachers have a comprehensive grasp of the core curriculum and a broad knowledge of the academic program. They also have a thorough understanding of the curricular strands that flow from the elementary grades into the middle grades and the connections between the middle grade courses and the high school curriculum.

    - Teachers in all disciplines have frequent opportunities to discuss together the scope and flow of the curriculum offered their students.

  - Teachers have many opportunities to work together on interdisciplinary teams and to develop interdisciplinary materials within the comprehensive core curriculum.
  - Teachers periodically meet with high school teachers to discuss the match between the middle grade curriculum and the expectations for high school freshmen.
  - Teachers meet at least annually with elementary teachers to compare the curriculum of the elementary feeder schools to the curricular expectations of the middle grades.

- Teachers and guidance staff strive to ensure that all students understand the consequences of their academic choices and how future options and opportunities can be restricted or expanded by these personal educational decisions.

- Each student is well known by his or her teachers and the guidance staff. There is sufficient communication between teachers and guidance staff so that each student receives timely, accurate, and specific academic counseling.

- Parents are actively involved in the academic counseling of their children. Through regularly planned activities such as parent-teacher conferences, conversations with guidance staff members, schoolwide meetings, and home-school communications, they know what courses their children should take so that no options are later closed to them.

- Through academic counseling and other student support services, students develop a clear concept of their human potential and the affirmation and motivation that inspires them to strive to become their best.

- A student-study-team approach is used to ensure professional guidance and collaboration in addressing students'specific needs.

- Other student support services include teacher advisement, group guidance, peer advisement, and counseling and guidance services.

- The resources of the community, including health support services and social services systems, have been identified and are being used to provide physical and emotional support to students.

- To the extent feasible, students have the same advisor throughout the middle grades.

- The advisement program includes:

  - Orientation to the middle grades program
  - Study skills
  - Understanding of self and others
  - Awareness of values
  - Decision making and goal setting
  - Career information
  - Other information and activities as established by the school staff

- Cognitive learning strategies are taught to all students and include:

  - Rehearsal: repetition, copying, underlining
  - Elaboration: mental images, paired associations, analogies
  - Organization: grouping, ordering, outlining
  - Comprehension monitoring: self-questioning, self-testing, self-reviewing
  - Affective: alertness, anxiety control, focusing, ignoring distractions, self-rewards, self-praise

- The student support system is as readily available and fully utilized by the average achieving students as it is by students who excel academically and those who are perceived to be at-risk.

- A fundamental premise of the student support system is that all students can succeed, including those identified as being at-risk.

  - Teachers get to know each of their students. Through the use of interdisciplinary teams, students are known by a team of teachers who work together on a daily basis.
  - A mixture of heterogeneous grouping and ability grouping is used throughout the school to support the various learning styles of students.
  - Cooperative learning strategies are used to help students experience success at the assigned tasks and to develop identification and friendship with their peers.
  - Alternative learning strategies and formats are utilized for students who are experiencing difficulties with the curriculum.
  - Tutors and mentors are used for one-to-one interactions.
  - Students are challenged to work on specific, concrete assignments, including individual and group projects which have a direct relationship to the "real world," rather than on abstract, meaningless remediation.
  - All students, including those with acute basic skill difficulties, are able to explore the thoughts and feelings embedded in the subject matter of the core curriculum.
  - Cultural support systems have been established for students from varied ethnic backgrounds, including those with limited proficiency in English.

- All students have scheduled access to school-related health support services. These services include:

  - Instruction in general health practices, safety, and first aid
  - Early identification of communicable diseases
  - Dental, vision, and hearing screening
  - Detection and referral of cases involving child abuse, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, pregnancies, obesity, and other types of potentially life-threatening situations
  - Identification and linkage with community health agencies and services

IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

The improvement processes are the means by which schools can make their vision a reality. The improvement processes include the procedures used by staff members, administrators, parents, and students to plan, implement, and evaluate improvements in their curriculum and instructional program. This criterion focuses on how these improvement processes support and promote the quality of the curriculum and the instructional program, the environment and culture of the school, the skills and knowledge of the staff, and each student's learning. A key goal for the school as an organization is the institutionalization of effective improvement processes as routines in the day-to-day life of the school.

Apply this criterion equally to all students, including average students, limited-English-proficient students, students achieving at a level significantly below that of their peers, gifted and talented students, students receiving special education instruction and services, and students who are members of ethnic groups underrepresented in colleges and universities.

COMMON UNDERSTANDING

The improvement processes used by staff members, administrators, parents, and students are the pathway to the vision they hold of what school can be. They enable the development and articulation of a common understanding of what all students will learn in school, how they will learn it, and how they will be supported as learners. These improvement processes are dynamic, valued by the school community, and routinely used for renewal and improvement. The resulting improvement goals reflect a strong academic orientation; a pervading consideration of the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional characteristics of the students; and concern for their moral and ethical development.

IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

The improvement processes are comprehensive but realistically scheduled. Curriculum reform and development are carried out in concert with the state textbook and curriculum adoption cycle. In each area of the comprehensive core curriculum, curriculum and instructional practices are regularly reviewed, the achievement of specific groups of students analyzed, improvement areas developed, and changes implemented and periodically evaluated. The exploratory and elective curricula are similarly evaluated, as are extra-curricular, cocurricular, and intramural activities. All student populations are considered in every area of the school program. Staff commitment to developing an organization which is responsive to students' stages of development in the middle grades is clear and pervasive. Thoughtful consideration of the general developmental characteristics of young adolescents, as well as the specific characteristics of students at risk of not fulfilling their academic and personal potential, is reflected in school improvement decisions.

SCHOOLWIDE DECISION MAKING

Schoolwide decision-making processes are clearly defined and widely known. The processes used ensure broad collaboration among staff members, administrators, students, parents, and community members and are appropriate to the decisions to be made. Issues are studied and decided by appropriate groups of faculty members and others who will implement the decisions reached. Expertise from outside groups is sought and utilized to expand the scope of improvement possibilities. In addition, teams of staff members from the different disciplines plan together to develop interdisciplinary instructional strategies. All staff members are encouraged to initiate action toward common goals in creative ways that capitalize on their strengths.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The principal provides leadership to the entire school community as it systematically strives to bring its vision for the school to life. The principal and other school leaders promote and support continuous personal and organizational renewal in all aspects of the program. Time and other necessary resources are allocated to a regular process of analyzing and evaluating a broad range of data about performance, morale, and motivation of the students and staff members, the organization of the school, and the implementation of the instructional program. These data become the basis for discussions about the effectiveness of the school program and for decisions about how the program should be improved. From these discussions, plans for improvement are made and implemented. The resulting improvement plan serves to remind faculty members and others of the agreements they reached and to provide an improvement map for all to follow. There is a system for monitoring improvement efforts to ensure they are being carried out and that they are achieving the desired results.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development activities, which are collegially planned, carried out, and evaluated, enhance the knowledge and skills required to achieve academic goals and to respond to the developmental characteristics of middle grade students. The activities reflect the collective and individual goals and requirements of the district and of all members of the school community; they are taken seriously by each staff member. Staff interaction on important curricular, instructional, and developmental issues helps sustain high staff interest in professional growth and development.

SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION

Supervision of instruction is designed to enhance professional growth and development, and the process is carried out in an atmosphere of congeniality and support. Faculty members share a collegial responsibility for high-quality curriculum and instruction and for the well-being of their students; there exists throughout the school a definable professional ethic about teaching and learning that is readily accepted by the teachers and encouraged by the administrators.

EXEMPLARS

- The improvement processes are those procedures used to evaluate the effectiveness of all parts of the school program, to plan necessary improvements, to put the improvements into operation, to monitor their implementation, and to make changes as necessary to ensure that the planned improvements do in fact improve the quality of the school program. The principal and other school leaders articulate the vision for the school and use these improvement processes to make that vision a reality.

- Each area of the comprehensive core curriculum is reviewed periodically.

    - The review of each area of the curriculum is based on the appropriate state curriculum framework and K-8 curriculum guide, as well as other curriculum and instructional resources.

  - The impact of curriculum and instruction on each identifiable student group is analyzed, including average students, students with special needs, gifted students, boys, girls, the different minority students, students with limited English proficiency, average students, and so forth.
  - Following this assessment, specific improvements in curriculum and instruction are planned and appropriate instructional materials are selected.
  - These improvements are implemented and carefully monitored, with changes being made in response to critical needs as identified by the teaching staff.

- All staff members are knowledgeable about how to reach decisions to change the way things are done at school. They feel that they have ready access to that process whether the change relates to a standard classroom procedure, curriculum content, particular instructional strategies, specific grade-level activities, or schoolwide policies and practices.

- Time is provided regularly for teachers to work together and with others in planning and monitoring program improvements and in solving problems as they arise.

- In school improvement schools the school site council is at the center of the improvement process:

  - Council members participate in the assessment of the program, set priorities for improvement efforts, and in collaboration with other teachers and parents, establish improvement goals and objectives and design strategies for achieving those goals and objectives.
  - Council members determine how the available resources will be used to achieve the goals and objectives and participate in monitoring the effectiveness of the improvement activities.

- In all other schools there are established and readily accessible procedures for involving parents and community members in planning improvements. Compensatory education and bilingual education advisory councils are directly involved in planning improvements in the program experienced by the students they represent.

- The assessment program is comprehensive and ongoing. It includes a wide variety of data on student achievement and program effectiveness. These data are routinely used in planning improvements in curriculum, instruction, and student support services.

- The broad-based collaborative planning process results in the following:

  - Standards and expectations for students' achievement and behavior are known and implemented throughout the school.
  - The efforts of everyone at the school are focused on achieving the goals and objectives of program improvement.
  - Curriculum, instruction, and evaluation are in alignment in each curriculum area.
  - Services for students with special needs are coordinated with the students' regular instructional program through collaborative efforts of the faculty members serving those students. Efforts are made to avoid intrusion into regular instructional time as services are provided. There is neither fiscal nor educational supplanting of the core program for specially funded students.
  - The resources at the school are focused on achieving the improvement goals and objectives.

- The school planning process is viewed by faculty members as the essential element in their efforts to develop and maintain a high-quality instructional program for all their students.

- Collaboration among staff members is a schoolwide characteristic. Teachers share their good ideas and successful practices with each other; they help each other refine their instructional skills; they share what they know about the developmental characteristics of the students in general as well as those of specific students they share.

- Teachers are the primary architects of professional development activities. They play the major role in defining the content, design, and implementation of school-based staff development activities. These activities are clearly linked to both the district's and the school's visions and goals.

- Staff development activities are designed to address individuals', grade-level, and school-level priorities and to represent the commitment of the staff to continue to grow intellectually, to gain new skills, and to refine existing skills.

- All staff development activities use effective teaching practices, including presentation of theory, modeling or demonstration, practice under simulated conditions, structured or open-ended feedback, coaching for application, and the use of teacher surrogates, including aides, tutors, and mentors.

- District and school administrators support staff development activities through their participation, allocation of time, and use of fiscal and personnel resources.

- Supervisors of instruction have been well prepared to carry out their task and teachers as well as the supervisors look upon classroom observations or discussions as a means of further increasing their competence as effective, caring teachers.

END

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991